'Nabob, historian and orientalist' : the life and writings of Robert Orme (1728-1801).

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"NABOB, HISTORIAN AND ORIENTALIST."

The Life and Writings of Robert Orme (1728-1801)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the life and writings of Robert Orme (1728-1801), the first Official Historiographer of the East India Company.

The work begins with a study of the main events of Orme's life and his career as an East India Company servant. Orme began his Indian career in 1742, when he arrived in Bengal. In 1753 he was promoted and appointed to the Madras Presidency, where he played an important role in the politics of the time. Orme returned home to England in 1760, where he involved himself in the politics of East India House and began his literary career. By the end of the decade, Orme's efforts had gained him some recognition and in 1769 he was designated Official Historiographer.

The second half of the thesis is an analysis of Orme's writings. Orme's magnum opus was his "History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan". This was a military history of the early phases of British expansion in India and it was published in two volumes, in 1763 and 1778. Orme also made several studies of Indian culture and society, and during his career he compiled various maps, essays and printed works, all dealing with India. The intellectual framework, the motives, the methods and the significance of Orme's various writings are all of great interest, and we hope to examine and discuss them at length.

As a result, this study is partly biography and partly literary history. Both sections are closely interlinked, for the events of his life influence the pattern of Orme's writings and are frequently reflected in the attitudes which characterise it.

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PART III: WORKS

DEDICATION.

This Work is Dedicated To
the Memory of my Beloved Grandparents

Ran Bandara Tammita Nilamé.
and
Tikiri Kumari Tammita Kumarihamy.

Also To My Parents,
To Whom I Owe Everything.

Major Asoka Rajendra Delgoda.
and
Asokamala Lakshmi Tammita Kumarihamy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this thesis, to denote manuscript material:

P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
B.L.	British Library.
Add. Mss.	Additional Manuscripts.
IOL.	India Office Library.
IOR.	India Office Records.
Eur. Mss.	European Manuscripts.

The following abbreviations are used to denote manuscripts in the Orme Collection.

OV.	Orme Various.
India	India Manuscripts.

Manuscripts and Records not otherwise referenced are from the India Office Library.

The following abbreviations are used for printed sources:

DNB.	**Dictionary of National Biography.** 22 vols. Ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (London, 1908-90).
Madras.	**Records of Fort St. George.**
S.O.A.S. Bulletin.	**Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.**

Orme's various publications have been denoted as follows:

History	**History of the Military Transaction of the British Nation in Indostan.** 2 vols, 4th Edition (London, 1803).

As I rule I have used the 4th Edition, which was the last version to have been revised by the author himself. On occasion I have also used the 1st Edition, which was published in 2 separate volumes, in 1763 and 1778 respectively. This has been denoted as follows:

History (1763)	1st Volume.
History (1778)	2nd Volume.

Orme's other major work is **The Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire.** There are 2 Editions of this. The 1st Edition was published in 1782 and the 2nd Edition in 1805. In general I have used the 2nd Edition, which was also edited by the author before his death. This is denoted as follows:

Fragments	**The Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire,** 2nd Edition (London, 1805).

The place of publication for all publications is London, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction.

Robert Orme came from a family with close Indian connections, which by the time he was born, already had a well-established tradition of service in the East India Company. In accordance with these traditions Orme too was trained with a view to a career out in India and, at an early age, he was sent out there to seek his fortune. In Orme's early days the East India Company was still very much a trading body. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century, the British settlements at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were confined to little more than the coastal hinterlands around them. They existed purely for commercial ends: "India was considered a place of temporary residence where one made a fortune and then returned home."[1] Trade and commerce were the primary concerns of the day, outside of this neither the Company nor its servants had any real desire to understand India or involve themselves with its natives.

This then was the environment in which Orme began his career. He was appointed first of all to the Bengal Presidency. Here he was to spend almost a decade, engaged in the mundane commercial duties of a junior Company servant. Gradually however, by means of his literary skills and by assiduous self-promotion, Orme began to improve his prospects. He returned home to England in 1753, where these tactics proved a great success. He made several important friends amongst the Directors of the Company and managed to secure an unprecedented promotion for himself to the ranks of the Council at Madras. Within the year, he had arrived back at Madras, where for the next five years he was to play an important political role. Orme threw himself wholeheartedly into the life of the settlement and showed considerable ability both as an administrator and as a diplomat. This, allied with the influential contacts which he had developed back in England, gave him every chance of succeeding to the Governorship. Unfortunately for Orme, the unconventional methods which he had used to advance his career proved to be his undoing. In 1758 he was forced to resign from the service and returned home prematurely.

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1 F. Van Aaalst, 'The British View of India 1750-1785,' Ph.D Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1970, pp.10-11.

Orme's later years in India were caught up in the great events of the Anglo-French struggle for mastery on the subcontinent. In 1744 hostilities had broken out in South India between the English and French East India Companies as a result of the War of the Austrian Succession. The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) failed to bring a lasting settlement and by 1750 hostilities had been resumed. Within a short time both sides, together with their native allies, were locked in a bitter struggle for control of the Carnatic. By 1753 the English had gained the upper hand through the victories of Clive and Stringer Lawrence. Dupleix, the architect of French ambitions in India was recalled and in 1754 peace was concluded between the two Companies. This, however, was to prove only a temporary respite for the British. In 1756, news reached Madras that the settlement at Calcutta had been captured and sacked by the Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula. An expedition, under the command of Robert Clive, was dispatched to Bengal to restore the situation. Clive succeeded in recapturing Calcutta and at the battle of Plassey in 1757 he overthrew the Nawab and laid the foundations for the British conquest of Bengal. The outbreak in 1756 of the Seven Years War also signalled the final phase of the Anglo-French conflict. The French, who had sent out substantial reinforcements to India, took the offensive and by 1758, they were besieging Madras itself. Thereafter, however, the tide turned in favour of the British. The siege of Madras was abandoned and the French were gradually forced back in both the Carnatic and the Deccan. In 1760 Eyre Coote won a decisive victory at the battle of Wandewash. Subsequently French resistance crumbled and in 1761 the British took the French capital of Pondicherry.

The momentous events of these years were to play a crucial part in Orme's life. They excited and inspired him, and he decided to make them the subject of the **History** which he had begun writing whilst he was still in India. This work, entitled **A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan,** was Orme's magnum opus and it was to occupy him for the greater part of his life. As a prominent member of the Madras Council during this crucial period, Orme himself was to play an important role in many of these developments. For example, he had a very significant part in the deliberations on the measures to be taken for the recovery of Bengal. Indeed, this study will show that the part which he played was to have a vital influence on the measures which were finally adopted.

Back in England, Orme resumed work on his **History.** The first volume was published in 1763 to considerable critical acclaim. The second volume, although it was not published until 1778, was just as well received and Orme was widely applauded for having established 'Indian' history on a sound critical basis. At the same time, Orme was also engaged in trying to build a new career for himself in East India Company politics in England. This, however, proved a much less straightforward task, and Orme found himself ensnared and swamped by the bitter factionalism which characterised Company politics from the mid 1760s. Nevertheless, Orme persevered with his studies and in 1769 his efforts gained the recognition of the Directors, who made him the Company's first official Historiographer.

The events of the last few years had completely transformed the landscape which Orme had known. As a result of the demise of the French and the overthrow of Siraj-ud-Daula, Britain, which had previously only possessed a few coastal settlements, was now in control of vast areas of Bengal and Southern India. This wave of expansion, however, was not regarded with universal enthusiasm. The East India Company itself regarded conquest as incompatible with trade and in 1767 its Secretary told the House of Commons that "the general tenor of the Company's orders were not to act offensively .... We don't want conquest and power; it is commercial interest only we look for."[2]

Orme too, felt very strongly about the great new territorial acquisitions which had been made. Conquest it seemed, had only served to bring with it further troubles and complications. In Bengal, the final defeat of Siraj-ud-Daula had been marked by bribery and corruption on a vast scale. Enormous presents were made to Clive and the other Company servants, in return for which Mir Jafar was installed as the new Nawab. Mir Jafar soon found it impossible to satisfy the demands which were made on him and he was deposed by the British in favour of his son-in-law, Mir Kasim. However, this did not curb the rapacity of the Company's servants, who continued abusing the commercial privileges which the Nawab had granted to the British. Outraged at these activities the new Nawab allied himself with the Nawab of neighbouring Oudh, Shuja-ud-Daula. After a few initial setbacks, the combined

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2 P.J. Marshall, **Problems of Empire. Britain and India 1757-1813** (London, 1968), p.17.

forces of Mir Kasim and his new ally were decisively defeated in 1764 at the battle of Buxar, which effectively established British military supremacy over north and central India. This, however, did not put an end to the problems. In Bengal the situation degenerated into a morass of internecine feuds and bitter faction fighting, which was to continue well into the 1770s. It was not only in Bengal that vast fortunes were being made. The Company's servants in Madras were also enriching themselves, but in a different way - by lending money at huge rates of interest to Muhammad Ali, the British backed Nawab of the Carnatic. Here too, there was grave dissension within the ranks of the Council, between the civil and military arms.

So it was that in 1767, when war broke out with Hyder Ali, the ruler of neighbouring Mysore, Madras found itself totally unprepared. The laurels which had been gained by Clive, Lawrence and Coote were severely tarnished, as the British armies found themselves unable to bring this new native threat to heel. Although peace was concluded in 1769 it was very much on Hyder's terms, hardly what the British had been used to. In 1776 hostilities broke out with the Maratha confederacy, the other great native power in south west India. Within a short time the British found themselves locked in another long, drawn-out struggle. This too ended in a humiliating failure, and in 1778 they were once again forced to conclude a highly ignominious settlement. The struggle with both these powers was to resume in earnest in 1780. Thus the early years of the 1780s found the British still fighting an attritious and indecisive series of wars, often on several fronts and frequently verging on the brink of disaster.

These then were the events which dominated Orme's later years. They provided a deeply disillusioning picture of corruption, misgovernment and military failure, which seemed to him to be symptomatic of all the ills of territorial empire. Instead of continuing with his **History,** Orme turned his energies in the direction of Oriental studies. The intellectual climate was now very much in favour of Indian studies and this, Orme felt, was the area where he could contribute the most. Encouraged by this, Orme launched his own researches into Indian history. In 1782 he published the result of his researches in a new work, **the Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire,** this, in fact, was to be his last work. Orme's health and his finances had always been recurring problems. These pressures combined to force him

to scale down the extent of his political and literary activities, and by the middle of the decade, Orme had virtually retreated into retirement.

This work begins with a study of the events of Orme's life and career. Orme's life is of great interest in itself, for he provides a very interesting personal study: a complex, highly intelligent man, deeply ambitious and possessed of considerable literary abilities. There were also several aspects to his career. At various times Orme found himself engaged in a number of different tasks, and his life offers a multi-faceted study. He began by pursuing the standard Indian career of an East India Company servant or 'Nabob', as returned Company servants came to be known in England. His career back in England too, was very much that of the returned 'Anglo-Indian' and Orme remained very closely associated with Indian affairs and politics. At the same time, he also developed a considerable reputation for himself as a man of letters. He spent a great part of his life in near seclusion, reading voraciously and studying long and hard in pursuit of his **History;** this work absorbed many of the intellectual currents of his day and was to earn him widespread esteem as a serious and substantial historian. Finally in later life, Orme became an 'Orientalist'; he turned his attention to the study of Indian history and tried to play his part in the great advances which were being made in uncovering India's past. This was not all; although primarily an 'Indian' figure, Orme was also well known in intellectual and literary circles. As a man of wide ranging interests and considerable culture, he was well acquainted with many of the prominent artists, writers and thinkers of his day.

By drawing upon the details of Orme's life, this study also reveals a considerable amount about the mechanics of the East India Company service: the conditions it entailed and the qualities it required. Orme's example provides a good case study of how to get on in an Indian career and the means by which one could manipulate the system in order to get promotion. There were also other requirements. The attrition and vicissitudes of politics in Madras demanded a forceful personality and a strong nerve. However, in such a close and tightknit community, perhaps the most important quality of all was the ability to get on with one's colleagues. This, as Orme was to discover to his cost, was an essential pre-requisite. This study also throws light on the early involvement of the government in

Indian affairs and the influence which it could often bring to bear through the efforts of individual figures. The government's developing role is depicted in the picture which Orme gives of the increasingly disorganised and factious state of East India politics in England. Company politics during these years was dominated by the two great factions, led by Clive and Laurence Sulivan. Orme's own case provides us with a study of a small independent trying to carve out a role for himself but caught between these two great monoliths.

The origins of Orme's **History** are deeply rooted in the events of his life and its pattern reflects his own shifting circumstances. Orme's own life therefore performs an important function in helping interpret the **History,** for we cannot fully understand it without knowing his biography. The close relationship between the two is illustrated in the chapter which deals with Orme's friendship with Robert Clive. The friendship with Clive, the founder of the British Empire in India, was probably the most important relationship of Orme's life, and I have chosen to deal with it separately. Not only does the waxing and waning of their friendship have a momentum which is all its own, it also has considerable significance for the work as a whole. This is because the events of the friendship also played a crucial role in the course and development of the **History.** Orme's initial enthusiasm for the **History** was conceived in a haze of admiration for Clive; as their friendship began to decline so did his enthusiasm for his work. As a result, what was originally a near-panegyric was progressively re-edited as Orme became more and more critical of his hero. The relationship with Clive effectively links the biography with the rest of Orme's writings. It introduces the second half of the thesis and acts as the hinge of the entire study.

The next part of the thesis concentrates entirely on the **History** and is divided into several sections. I will begin by examining Orme's attitudes when he first began his work and the intellectual environment which shaped his thinking. I will then look at the nature of Orme's sources, and the methods and techniques which he adopted towards them. The third section concentrates on the drafts themselves, and will I hope, cast some light on Orme's objectives and priorities as a historian. Finally, there is the commercial and critical impact of Orme's work. I shall approach this by studying the various reviews of Orme's work and comparing them with the reception accorded to the other 'Indian' historians of his day. I shall adopt a similar method

to try and assess Orme's standing within the wider world of eighteenth century letters. This entails comparing his reputation with that of the leading historians of his day, such as David Hume, William Robertson and Edward Gibbon.

The final section of the thesis will focus on Orme's studies of Indian culture and society, his 'Orientalist' writings. These are fairly diverse, comprising several essays, numerous maps and a fully fledged work of history. A study of these various aspects of his work conveys an idea of Orme's understanding of India, and the extent to which he was able to contribute to Europe's knowledge of it.

Despite the importance of the events in which Orme was involved, very little is known about the man himself. He appears only on the margins of the great events of the time and as a peripheral figure in the lives of its leading personalities. The aim of this study is to rescue Robert Orme from the anonymity to which he has hitherto been relegated. Although not a military man himself, Orme was involved in many of the strategic decisions leading to the establishment of British power in India. The early heroes of British India were his contemporaries and Orme was the historian of their era. This study hopes to show that he was at least as interesting as the other leading figures of his generation, men such as Clive, Stringer Lawrence and Thomas Saunders, whose names are now synonymous with the foundation of the British Empire in India.

PART I: THE LIFE.

Chapter I

An Intellectual in India: The Formative Years (1728 - 1753).

Robert Orme was born on Christmas Day 1728 at Anjengo (Travancore) where his father was Chief of the settlement. He was the second son of Dr. Alexander Orme, a physician and surgeon in the service of the East India Company. Alexander Orme had arrived in India in 1706. A year later he applied to join the service of the East India Company at Calicut:

> Mr Alexander Orme, surgeon of Anjengo Fort has made his request to us, that he may be entered a Company's servant. We find him a very capable and ingenious person, that would be extraordinary serviceable to our masters and us in sickness. If your Excellency and the Council are pleased to enter him as a factor, we request that we may have him at this factory, being in great want of assistance as above specified. Robert Adams, John Johnson.[1]

Alexander Orme forged a close friendship with Robert Adams, the Chief of the Calicut settlement. So close in fact, that they went on to marry two sisters. ~~from the same family~~. Alexander Orme enjoyed a long and distinguished career at Anjengo and rose to become Chief of the settlement. He had four children, two sons and two daughters; his second son he named Robert after his great friend Adams.

Very little is known about the Orme family's background . There is no evidence that they were landed gentry or that they had any connections at all with any land or estates. What little we do know revolves around the rather ambiguous status of Alexander Orme as physician and surgeon to the East India Company. Orme senior's official rank was given as surgeon of the Anjengo settlement. In the eighteenth century, the surgeon was definitely at the lower end of the medical profession. Surgery without anaesthetic was a rough and bloody business, hardly likely to attract anyone of refined taste or adequate fortune, and in Alexander Orme's

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1 "An Account of the Life and Writings of the Author" in **Fragments**, p.vi.

day the profession was still very much a branch of the Barber's Company. In these circumstances a surgeon could hardly be a gentleman at all; indeed he appeared little more than a skilled craftsman.

However, Orme senior is also frequently referred to as a Physician.[2] This was a very different matter, for the Physician was very much a gentleman. He came from a much more educated and cultured background. He would have to have graduated at a university and was usually a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. This would have been followed by a further period of education abroad for the M.D. degree in Italy, Holland or Germany. Unlike the surgeon, the physician had to undertake a course of professional education and had to meet certain requirements to qualify; for example, he had to submit a thesis.

The young Robert was a weak and rather delicate child. So much so, that for reasons of health as well as education it was thought best to send him 'home'. Thus at the age of two the child was sent back to England. Here he was entrusted to the care of his Aunt Adams, who resided at Cavendish Square in London. He was brought up for the next three years by his aunt at her home, in what was already one of the more fashionable and wealthy areas of London. His education was then entrusted to a clergyman who was to prepare him for his next step in life, entrance to Harrow. After 12 months under the clergyman's charge he was thought to be ready and at the tender age of six he left his Aunt's house to begin his schooling.

Eton and Westminster were the leading schools of the day; Harrow, along with Rugby, was still one of the lesser public schools. Originally a free grammar school, there were still a few free scholars left. Harrow in Orme's day was a school of almost 150 youths. The headmaster was Reverend James Cox, formerly of Merton College. The school itself was set amidst the most beautiful and healthy surroundings, on Harrow Hill; in view of the young Robert's delicate health the atmosphere must have played a large part in deciding his family's choice. Politics too may have had something to do with the decision. Many of the other leading schools of the day, especially Eton, were notoriously Jacobite in their sentiments. Harrow,

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2 **The Harrow School Register 1571-1800**, Ed. W.T.J. Gunn (1934), p.20.

however, was a school with a strong Whig connection; its main patron, the Duke of Chandos, was one of George I's strongest supporters.

The six year old Orme must have been amongst the youngest of his schoolfellows. It was normally the custom to enter Harrow at the age of eight and Orme's case was highly unusual. Indeed, being taken away from the only home he knew at this early age would have done little for the child's sense of security. This early sense of insecurity may go a long way towards explaining the difficult and contrary nature he was to exhibit in later life. School life in the eighteenth century was harsh, conditions were hard and discipline often quite savage. Of Harrow at this time it was said:

> It was not a school for the timid; the delicate, the sensitive withered in the severe climate but the fittest, who survived, emerged from the ordeal with strong brains and characters.[3]

It was not an ordeal which Orme, hardly the most robust of children, particularly relished. In later life it was an experience which he recalled somewhat ruefully:

> Our public schools are well calculated to make all boys fight, but all ideas of equality are lost on them by the constant example that the bigger boy may take the Apple from the less.[4]

The staple diet of the curriculum was classics. Greek was of some importance but the main business of school life was the reading of Latin authors. From seven in the morning until five in the evening, the pupils would be busy learning Latin grammar or translating and reciting Latin prose and verse. Ovid, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, Plautus, the commentaries of Caesar, the letters of Pliny and Cicero, these are the works which would have formed the bulk of Orme's education at Harrow. By all accounts, this side of his education greatly inspired him and he excelled at it: "He studied the classics with delight and was equally distinguished by quickness of parts, and assiduity of application".[5]

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3 **Harrow School**, Ed. E.W. Howson & G.T. Warner (1898), p.184.

4 IOL, OV.222, Orme - J. Tobin, April 1 1761, p.80.

5 **Fragments**, p.vii.

He was also beginning to shows signs of a keen taste for tales of adventure and romance. Like many other children of his day, Orme grew up on the chapbook versions of famous legends and folk tales. His early favourites were tales of romance and chivalry like the **History of the Seven Champions of Christendom** and the **History of Fortunatas.** The rumbustious exploits of **John Hickathrift,** with his feats of giant killing and dragon slaying was another early favourite, as was **Pilgrim's Progress.**[6] Along with the classics, it was this world of great adventures, of magic and enchantment, which appealed the most strongly to his childhood imagination.

Sadly, Orme was not meant to pursue his classical education or destined for a traditional career. In 1741, now thirteen years old, he was withdrawn from Harrow. Maybe the fact that both his parents had died while he was still at school had something to do with it; anyway, it was now intended that Orme should join the East India Company service. For this purpose he was placed in a private academy in London where he was taught the business of trade and commerce. After almost seven years at Harrow the change must have come as an unpleasant shock; nevertheless he accepted his lot and buckled down to his new task with determination:

> His progress in this branch of knowledge was proportional to the talents he had previously displayed in more lively and attractive studies, and as he could not but have felt considerable regret at being obliged to relinquish those studies, his applying to others so little congenial, if not repulsive to a youthful mind, evinces uncommon vigour as well as diligence.[7]

In general we know very little about Orme's childhood years in England. What little we do know has to be gleaned from the list of his reading.[8] From this it becomes abundantly clear that Orme was a very bookish child and by all accounts a very precocious one. At the age of eleven he was reading **Polite Conversations,** Swift's biting satire on the behaviour of the fashionable classes, and

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6 OV.206, p.83.

7 **Fragments,** p.vii.

8 OV.206, p.83.

by the time he was thirteen he had read all of Shakespeare's plays. Though he had grown out of his chapbooks, his taste for adventure and great deeds still remained and Orme delved eagerly into the realms of classical and historical romance for any recreation of the past. While still at Harrow he discovered the epic world of Homer's **Iliad** and started reading it in translation. During his time at the commercial academy he turned to Richard Glover's epic poem **Leonidas**, a great contemporary success, which evoked for its reader the lost world of Homer and Virgil. In theatre too, his inclination tended towards the past, and he eagerly read any tragedies he could find with a classical or historical theme, such as Addison's **Cato** and Henry Brooke's **Gustavus Vasa.**

It was intended that Orme would be sent out to Bengal where he still had family. His elder brother William was already there, as was one of his sisters, Margaret Theresa, who in 1736 had married Captain Lloyd, one of the Company's military personnel. The Bengal Burial Register suggests that there had been quite a number of Ormes in Calcutta and it is entirely possible that Orme's parents too may have moved there from Bombay. The St. Anne's Burial Register, for instance, records the death of a Mr Alexander Orme there on 19th April 1736.[9] All in all, Bengal seemed the nearest thing he had to a home in India.

In 1742 the teenaged Robert Orme, still hardly 14, embarked for India. Upon his arrival in Calcutta he was engaged to a private English mercantile concern, Jackson and Wedderburn. At the time they were among the foremost English private traders in India. John Jackson was a member of the Bengal Council, while Alexander Wedderburn, his partner, was a free merchant. It was with Jackson that Orme lodged upon his arrival. He was paid 500 rupees a year and provided with his food and lodging, an ample subsistence as he recalled in later years.[10] While with the firm, Orme made his first voyage along the coasts of India. In 1743 he sailed from Bengal right round the peninsula, to Surat on one of the freight ships. On his return he visited Fort St. David and Madras for the first time.

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9 IOR. Bengal Burial Register, N/1/1 p.206.

10 OV.202, Orme - W. Hosea, Oct. 26 1776, p.115.

Once in India, Orme launched himself on a determined effort to improve himself and remedy the gaps in his education. Whilst the other young men of his age were gambling, drinking and whoring, Orme devoted his time to intellectual pursuits. He spent long hours reading and studying widely and deeply into every branch of learning, from literature and philosophy to science and medicine. His intellectual endeavours attracted widespread comment and earned him the respect of his friends and contemporaries, who affectionately nicknamed him "Cicero".[11] By all accounts, Orme was a very earnest and serious young man and it is no great surprise to learn that he also had a strong religious side to his character at this stage. His reading, for example, displayed a keen interest in religion and theology, while his early writings on India too, were to have strong Christian overtones. Perhaps the most evocative example however, is the long prayer which he penned on hearing that he had finally been made a Writer.

> Forgive him, O Lord! his manifold breaches of thy ordinances, and endow him with the grace to amend his ways before thee. Cast from his heart the rancour of pride, the malignity of envy or malice, and all those tumultuous passions and urgent emotions ..... endow him with humility; grant him charity to all men.[12]

This introverted and very humble entreaty gives us some idea of just how seriously Orme took his religious beliefs at this stage in his career.

Despite this, there is little evidence that his religious beliefs were anything more than just one aspect of Orme's personality. This is reflected in his early reading habits, which for all his interest in matters of theology, always remained wide and very varied. Orme's first love was not history but poetry, which dominated his early reading: "I began to read in the year 1742. Poetry was then my occupation. I remember reading more of this than any other kind of reading till the year 1754."[13] Although Orme's tastes ran through the whole range of eighteenth century poetry, his preference was for the classical poets of his school days, whose work he

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11 OV.288, J.Repington - Clive, Feb.22 1753, p.97.

12 **Fragments**, p.viii.

13 OV.226, p.10.

began to rediscover out in India. Most of them, Horace, Virgil, Juvenal and Catullus he was able to read in the original Latin, while others, such as Lucan and Lucretius he read in translation. Horace, whose poems were taught with great thoroughness in most eighteenth century English schools, had a great appeal for the young Orme. He read and studied the **Epistles,** the **Satires** and the **Ars Poetica** with attention, even making a note on the number of verses they contained.[14] Orme's own poetry suggests that it was on Horace that he first modelled himself.[15] From his childhood days Orme also inherited a taste for epic poetry. He discovered Virgil at the age of fifteen and had since then read his works repeatedly and with the greatest attention.[16] More recent epic poetry too, such as Milton's **Paradise Lost**[17] and Pope's translations of the **Iliad** and the **Odyssey**[18], also had a great appeal for him. Pope's **Iliad,** for example, he first read whilst still at Harrow and then reread after his arrival in India. Most of Orme's early reading consisted of poetry, drama and fiction. He had a great liking for the theatre and read a considerable number of plays.[19] Orme also had a great taste for fiction and he went to great lengths to acquire the latest novels. For example, within two years of Fielding's novel **Joseph Andrews** first being published in England, Orme was already reading it in Bengal.[20]

Orme's first real experience of history had been with the laborious and meticulously researched annalist chronicles of the day. He had whiled away the long hours on the voyage out to India by reading Laurence Echard's voluminous **Roman History.** He had also read works like Rymer's **Foedera,** a compilation of the principle documents of English history, and Rapin-Thoyras' **Histoire d'Angleterre.**[21] Rapin-Thoyras' chronicle in particular, was one of the most well known histories of the time, and before Hume, its annalistic style was considered the foremost piece of historical

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14 OV.206, p.79.

15 **Fragments,** p.liv, p.lix.

16 OV.226, p.11.

17 Ibid. p.12.

18 Ibid. p.10.

19 OV.206, p.87.

20 Ibid. p.85.

21 Ibid.

writing of the day. Although it cannot compare with the volume of his other reading, there is no doubt that Orme did read a substantial amount of history in these early years. The history he read was mostly that of the ancient world. By the early twenties he had read most of the important Latin historians - Tacitus, Sallust, Caesar and Livy. Livy, above all, was his early favourite. What is particularly surprising is the complete lack of interest in Oriental history which Orme shows at this stage. Whereas Gibbon's early years were spent immersing himself in every branch of Oriental history,[22] Orme's intellectual experience of India was very much the product of his later years and only really began at a much later date. Like Gibbon though, Orme was very much a child of the Enlightenment. He was familiar with many of its seminal works, such as Montesquieu's **L'Esprit des Loix**[23] and Voltaire's **Le Siècle de Louis XIV**[24] from an early age. The influence of these works is very much reflected in his early writings, such as the essays on Indian society, which were closely structured around Montesquieu's theories.

Orme also took a great interest in biography. This too was predominantly inspired by the classics and Orme's reading ranged over works by Suetonius, Quintus Curtius and Plutarch. Above all, it was the figure of Cicero which most interested him, and Orme read all his surviving speeches[25] as well as Middleton's classic biography.[26] As the product of an age that was always comparing itself with classical antiquity, Orme like many other eighteenth century Englishmen, must have been assailed by the prevalent fear that his free heritage was being threatened by corrupt and factious politicians. To himself and his contemporaries therefore, the character of Cicero, the defender of Roman liberties and virtue in the dying era of the Republic, must have seemed especially relevant.

Even at this early stage it is possible to detect in Orme's reading a strong concern with public morals and the issue of corruption. A historian like Sallust, for example, was renowned for his strongly moralistic approach and

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22 E. Gibbon, **Memoirs of My Life**, Ed. B. Radice (Harmondsworth, 1984), p.72.

23 OV.206, p.91.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. p.89.

26 Ibid. p.85.

condemnation of corruption. Similarly, in the realm of biography, both Suetonius and Plutarch were deeply concerned with the moral character of their subjects. This concern was also very apparent in Orme's interest in contemporary literature. For example, he was particularly drawn towards the figure of Swift and read all his essays, poems and novels.[27] Swift too was deeply concerned with the social decline and degeneracy which he felt was creeping into English life. He considered it his duty to inquire into the causes of this trend and used his literary powers to arrest it. He came to see the Walpole era as the symbol of this pervasive corruption; it personified for him all the excesses of faction and arbitrary power to which he was so deeply averse.

Orme was a political animal from an early age. By the time he was sixteen, for example, he was already reading Bolingbroke's **Dissertation On Parties.**[28] His acquaintance with the political writings of Bolingbroke echoed his taste for Swift's work. Both men belonged to a circle which saw England as a society whose traditional social and political structure was being undermined by the money and the financial institutions of the new economic order. All the indications are that Orme too may have subscribed to a similar view. His interest in essays like Bolingbroke's **Dissertation On Parties** and his **Idea of A Patriot King**[29] suggests that he too, was sickened by the corruption of party politics. For Bolingbroke the venality which pervaded politics epitomised the corruption and luxury of this new order. He bitterly attacked Walpole, whom he blamed for presiding over this corrupt new system and for unashamedly defending it. To eighteenth century Englishmen Bolingbroke held out the salutary example of ancient Rome. Like England, Rome's grandeur had continued as long as she had preserved her virtue and her citizens' primary concern had remained the common good. When she grew corrupt and venal, however, her glory did not long survive her. Public spirit declined as Rome's citizens thought only of themselves. Factions consequently grew up and the commonwealth was abandoned to adventurers and self seekers. Bolingbroke warned that the same

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27 Ibid. p.87.

28 Ibid. p.85.

29 OV.226 p.13.

fate would befall England unless she eschewed faction and party politics and returned the constitution to its original principles. As a student of the classics, Orme would have been only too aware of the parallels drawn by Bolingbroke, and steeped as he was in ancient and contemporary models of corruption and decline, these arguments must have had a potent appeal. These concerns, about the power of money, the corrosive effect of party politics on virtue and morals and, above all, the pervasive fear of corruption and decline were all characteristic features of Augustan political thought. Orme's reading, as we can see, immersed him in these currents from an early age. For him therefore, these apprehensions must have seemed very real; indeed in later life they profoundly influenced the way he reacted to and interpreted British expansion in India.

His intellectual pursuits apart, the career which Orme found himself embarked upon was not markedly different from that of any other junior Company servant. According to the usual pattern, this entailed a slow, gradual progress through the ranks together with an increasing involvement in private trade. In 1744, Orme was appointed as a Writer in the Company's service. He was set to work in the Zamindar's office, under his patron and former employer John Jackson.[30] Two years later, he was promoted to work in the Buxey's or Paymaster's Office under the care of Humphrey Bellamy, another senior servant.[31] In 1747 he was moved into the Accountant's Office, where he began work on the Presidency's books.[32] In the same year, the sub Accountant Samuel Parkes was taken ill and became unable to carry on. Orme's experience and commercial training stood him in good stead and he was appointed as his replacement. On Parkes' death he was given the job permanently.[33]

By this time, Orme had gained enough experience to start trading on his own account. As it was unlikely that he would have had much capital of his own, he would probably have relied on borrowing from his friends and business associates, according to the usual pattern. In the first years of trading Orme dealt almost

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30 IOR. Bengal Civil Establishment Lists, L/F/10, p.1.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 **Fort William - India House Correspondence, vol.1, 1748-56,** Ed. K.K. Datta (New Delhi, 1958), p.245.

entirely in the mixed silk and cotton textiles for which Bengal was famous. Like many other small traders, he used the Company ships to ship his goods from one part of India to another, remaining content to pay the usual freight charges. He dealt in small quantities and seems to have aimed more at the quality end of the market. Most of the goods he dealt with were either fine quality silks or muslin.[34] The other end of his trade was in mixed cotton and silk goods, such as "romalls" (handkerchiefs) "cuttanees" (piecegoods) and seersucker cloths,[35] which were aimed mostly at the clothing market. Orme continued his trade in textiles for most of his time in Bengal and appears to have prospered in a moderate way. Whereas in 1745 he barely freighted more than 86 pieces of silk cloth or "soosies", by 1750 he was shipping 300 pieces. This degree of prosperity enabled him to concentrate more on the higher reaches of the market. By 1749[36] and 1750[37] he was dealing mostly in the more expensive silk goods like "soosies", "taffaties" and "saries". He was even able to afford to begin trading in small quantities of opium.[38]

As he gained in experience Orme began widening the circle of his business activities. His commercial interests ranged from chests of coral and treasure, which he imported from England,[39] to diamonds[40] where he would probably have been involved in helping his compatriots remit their fortunes back to England. A number of notes endorsed to Orme by other Company servants suggest that he may also have been involved in various moneylending enterprises:

> Mr. Robert Orme tendering an interest note in the names of messrs. Jackson and Stirling acct. the estate of Andrew Glen deceased, dated 15th Oct 1747 for Principal CR. 16,300.14.9 and desiring the interest thereof for a year to be paid to him being 1,667.16.[41]

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34 IOR. Bengal Public Consultations, P/1/18, pp.58-64, ff.107-10.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid. P/1/23, pp.21-2, f.21.

37 Ibid. pp.523-5, ff.249-250.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid. P/1/21, p.72, f.43.

40 Ibid. P/1/20, p.1052, f.356.

41 IOR. Bengal Public Consultations, P/1/22, p.514, f.31.

For a time he was involved in a partnership with two very senior Company servants, Thomas Burrow and William Styche, both members of the Council.[42] By the middle of 1750, however, the partnership seems to have dissolved and Orme was back to trading on his own account.

In 1748 Orme suffered a deep personal blow; his brother William died. We know next to nothing of William Orme; indeed the only real memoir that we have is a poem written by his brother. Entitled 'Verses to the Memory of my Brother',[43] it is a sensitive and moving piece, which shows that Orme was much attached to his brother and felt his loss greatly. Physically too the blow must have taken its toll; the following year Orme had his first attack of the chronic ill health which was to plague him for the rest of his life. He became so severely ill that he was unable to carry on at his job, with the result that the Presidency's accounts for that year were delayed.[44] His illness continued into 1750 and eventually forced him to resign his post.[45] Despite his wretched state of health Orme made two important new friends that year. It was in the early months of 1750 that he first met Robert Clive, who was then convalescing in Bengal. The two young men took to each other and struck up an almost immediate friendship, which was to have momentous consequences for both of them. During this period Orme also met Benjamin Robins, the distinguished mathematician and military engineer, who was in Bengal on a visit. Robins was very impressed by the young Orme and the two men "commenced a very agreeable intercourse and sincere friendship."[46] The following year Orme was promoted to the rank of Factor and given the post of Export Warehouse Keeper.[47] However, he remained dogged by ill health and in February applied to go to the coast in order to try and regain his health.[48] He sailed first to Fort St. David and then on to Madras.

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42 Ibid. P/1/23. p.67, f.44.

43 **Fragments**, pp.lv-lvi.

44 **Fort William - India House Correspondence**, vol.1, p.393.

45 Ibid. pp.423-4.

46 **Bengal Past and Present**, vol.2 (1908), p.385.

47 IOR. Bengal Civil Establishment List, L/F/10, p.1.

48 **Fort William - India House Correspondence**, vol.1, p.522.

Orme was to spend nearly a year on the Coromandel Coast. It was to prove a formative period in his career. While he was at Fort St. David, he was encouraged by his friend Benjamin Robins to make a study of the civil administration or Zamindary of Calcutta.[49] In his response to his requests, Orme embarked on his first literary undertaking: a monograph on the duties of the Zamindar or European Magistrate of Calcutta. The problem with the administration, he said, was that hitherto the magistrate had been discharging two distinct duties, the administration of justice and collection of revenues, which had resulted in many abuses and confusions. In the circumstances, he argued, the best solution was to separate the revenues from the judiciary power.[50] This venture was to prove the first step in a much more formative move. It was while he was at Madras that Orme first began work on what was to become his magnum opus, his **History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan.** Despite the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1749 hostilities had broken out again between the English and the French over their support for rival candidates for the thrones of the Deccan and the Carnatic. Orme was greatly inspired by the stirring stories of the conflict, especially by what he saw as the glorious military deeds of his contemporaries and he was moved by a burning desire to commemorate their achievements. He was also very much motivated by his own career ambitions, for as he himself confessed, the interests of his employers the East India Company were always very much in his mind:

> The interests of the grandest society of merchants in the universe, in whose service I had long received employment, are so blended with the consequences of these occurrences that I confess I had some view to their satisfaction in placing them in a clearer and more methodical light than they have yet been viewed in.[51]

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49 OV.12, pp.155-72.

50 Ibid. p.171-2.

51 India II, p.339.

Orme was fully aware that his treatment of the war in the Carnatic would be greeted with the greatest interest back home and would thereby help draw attention to himself as a commentator on Indian affairs.

Even at this stage, all the signs suggest that Orme was a very ambitious young man. A traditional East India career, he had decided, was far too slow and arduous for his liking. Judging by the progress he had made so far, he would have to wait many more years before gaining even the junior ranks of the Council. His literary powers, however, offered him the means with which to break out of this rut. By building himself a reputation as an authority on Indian affairs, Orme saw an opportunity to get ahead of his contemporaries and establish himself as a deserving candidate for rapid promotion and advancement. The war in the Carnatic provided him with a golden opportunity and Orme threw himself into this new project with a will. While he was at Madras he managed to compile the whole of the first draft of his **History.** Entitled "A History of the Revolutions of Carnatica", the work was supposed to cover the history of the Carnatic from 1701 right down to 1753, when Orme set sail for England.[52]

It was during this time that Orme was engulfed in a scandal which nearly threatened to end his entire career. His sister Margaret Lloyd, with whom he had been on bad terms for some time, publicly denounced Orme for bribery and corruption and accused him of having embezzled the estate which had been left to her by her husband.[53] The affair caused a sensation and Orme was immediately sent for at Fort St. David to ask what he knew about it. Realising the grave implications which the charge could have for his career, Orme responded immediately. He made a lengthy statement justifying his actions and explaining in detail the origins of the case.[54] The whole problem, he explained, dated back to 1746, when his brother-in-law Captain John Lloyd had died, leaving behind him a wife and two children. According to the terms of his will, half of his estate was to go to his wife and the other half to his daughter. Margaret Lloyd had left for England soon

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52 OV.59, pp.1-102.

53 **Fort St. George. Diary & Consultation Book, 1751,** Ed. B.S. Baliga (Madras, 1938), p.114.

54 Ibid. p.114-19.

after, taking her daughter with her and leaving the matter in Orme's charge. Orme however, who was not yet eighteen himself, was still legally underage. Nevertheless, he saw it as his duty to try and ensure that the control of the estate remained within the family.[55]

Orme's task was further complicated by the corruptness of the Court which was considering the case. The Mayor, Captain Massey, was the presiding member of the Court. Greedy for his share of the interest and commission which would accrue to the Court, Massey was determined to keep the administration of the estate in its hands for as long as possible. However, he did offer one way out; swearing Orme to secrecy, he offered to relinquish his hold of the estate in return for a substantial bribe.[56] Orme agreed to pay and went to great lengths to raise the money, borrowing substantial amounts from his friends and acquaintances. As a result of all this, he found that he was forced to mortgage the estate. At the time however, his sister had been deeply grateful for his efforts and had showed it by making him her attorney. Subsequently though, their relationship had deteriorated quite badly and Orme had found it necessary to take legal steps to protect his niece's welfare.[57] For her own good he decided to put the child's future in the care of the Court of Chancery. In addition, he had also drawn a commission of five per cent of the estate in order to provide for his sister's other child, a young boy who had been left behind in India and who had not been named in the will. These actions, he said, had infuriated his sister and had prompted her to make the accusations which she did. As for the charges of bribery and corruption which were levelled at him, Orme was, if anything, even more forceful in his defence:

> It must appear to every unprejudiced person that there is no Resemblance in Equity and conscience through out the whole of it, to a bribe given to obtain judicial decisions. I am certainly as free from guilt or the surmise of guilt in it, as if I should compound with

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55 Ibid. p.115.

56 Ibid. p.116.

57 Ibid. p.118.

> a Housebreaker for taking half my money when he has the whole in power.[58]

His conduct, he insisted, had been honourable throughout; he even offered to have his books inspected by an accountant rather than have the least stain of self-interest cast on his name.

Orme returned to Bengal in the summer of 1752. Even though his stay here was short, barely 6 months, it was very productive. By now Orme's determination to establish a reputation for himself as a writer and authority on Indian affairs was well entrenched. Very much improved by his stay on the coast, Orme threw himself with a will into his writings. He began to study Indian society and its institutions and in September he produced an essay entitled **A General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan.**[59] This recorded his first impressions of Indian culture and society and dealt mainly with the social structure and character of the people themselves. Writing apart, he spent a great deal of his stay winding down his business activities and settling his accounts, for he had already decided to return to England. He had he felt, already achieved as much as he was going to out in India. England now seemed the most logical place from whence to pursue his career, it offered the most receptive audience for his writings and it was there he felt, that they would have the greatest impact.

In October, Orme left Bengal for the last time and journeyed back to Madras. The atmosphere there that autumn and the following winter was poisoned by a number of personal tensions. Far from remaining aloof, Orme became deeply embroiled in them. Indeed he was beginning to show an unsavoury talent for gossip and mischief making. He had become very familiar with one of the Company's commanders, Captain Rudolph de Gingens. De Gingens had not distinguished himself in the campaigns in the Carnatic; indeed he had acquired a rather inglorious reputation for incompetence and inactivity. He had become especially notorious for his inactivity at the siege of Trichinopoly in 1751, for which he had been abused to

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58 Ibid. p.116.

59 India I, pp.1-32.

his face by the Maratha leaders. De Gingens had recently retired from the service and had sent in a notoriously insulting letter of resignation to the board, which Orme was known to have drafted. Notwithstanding this, Orme was not above slandering his friend in private. Whilst discussing the prospect of a Maratha attack on Madras with some of his acquaintances, Orme voiced the opinion that De Gingens, given his past record, would be unlikely to draw his sword even if the whole town was massacred.[60] Unfortunately for him, his words leaked out and within a short time the whole town, including De Gingens, knew what he had said. Orme's reaction did him little credit.

> Orme in palliating the affair to De Gingens told him all he had said upon the subject was that as he had resigned the service sometime, it was not natural to think that he would engage in it again and that they had put this malicious construction upon it to make mischief between them.[61]

Indeed it reveals a quite unpleasant side to his nature and exposes him as a barefaced and cunning liar. His response too became widely known and, not unnaturally, did little to endear him to the inhabitants of Madras.

Orme also became embroiled in the bitter quarrel which had broken out between Thomas Saunders, the Governor and his commander-in-chief, Major Stringer Lawrence. He too, appears to have fallen out with the redoubtable Saunders. At any rate he spent much of his remaining time in Madras spreading false and quite malicious rumours about the Governor. Orme was also suspected of making mischief between the Governor and his new friend, Robert Clive, the hero of Arcot. Orme had already engaged to take ship for England with Clive and his new wife Margaret. They were to leave on the "Bombay Castle", which was due to sail in March. As the day of departure approached, the possible consequences of his foolish actions and the implication they might have for his career began to dawn on Orme. On the final day itself he made a last ditch attempt to make amends. He waited until Clive and his wife were safely aboard the "Bombay Castle" before going

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60 IOL. Eur. Mss. G 37, Box 21, E Maskelyne - R. Clive, April 19 1753.

61 Ibid.

to see Saunders, where by all accounts he all but threw himself at the Governor's feet:

> The reason of Orme's stay ashore so many hours after you (Clive), was to beg pardon of Mr Saunders, as he did thrice in the most abject, mean manner, as soon as his spirits returned to his assistance after a quarter of an hour's flutter. He acknowledged how he had taken great liberties with the Governor's character, begged him not to ruin him with the Company by writing against him and he did forgive it.[62]

By postponing this interview till the very last moment Orme made sure that Saunders would not have another chance to speak to Clive. Clive's friends, amongst others, read a great deal into this and it was clear to many of his fellows that Orme must have only redeemed himself by further maligning his unsuspecting friend.

The "Bombay Castle" sailed on the 17th March 1753. The voyage back to England was long and was in several stages. During it Orme spent much of his time in keen discussion with Clive, gleaning further materials for his history. The rest of the time he spent reading or working on his writings. The "Bombay Castle" reached the Cape of Good Hope in June, when Orme and the Clives disembarked and boarded the "Pelham", which was to take them to England. It was only after this that Orme got down to the real process of reworking his writings. He corrected, re-edited and rewrote large parts of his essay on the **General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan.**[63] He also added a third section, on the legal and judicial processes.[64] On the last stage of the voyage, from St Helena, Orme devoted himself to revising and reworking his "History of the War in the Carnatic".[65] By the time he reached England he had prepared a new draft.[66]

By the time he left India in 1753, by dint of great diligence and application, Orme had made himself into a thoroughly well rounded intellectual

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62 Ibid.

63 India I, p.18, p.32.

64 Ibid. pp.33-49.

65 OV.59, p.1.

66 India II, pp.339-445.

figure. More than anything, what really shaped his mind during those formative years was the intellectual inheritance of Europe, with its very strong classical and Enlightenment influences. At this stage his literary tastes still remained overwhelmingly classical, and as such clearly retained the imprint of his early education. Like his early schooling, his later reading was almost entirely Latin orientated, with perhaps the solitary exception of Plutarch. This, however, conforms to the expected pattern; what is really surprising is the complete lack of early interest in any form of Oriental history, be it the Persians, the Mongols, the Turks or the Arabs.

Orme's early years show him to have been an earnest and serious young man, who was at the same time highly ambitious and very determined to get ahead. Instead of indulging himself in the pursuits common to other young men of his age, Orme devoted his time to his books and spent long hours trying to improve himself. Sadly, Orme's determination and lofty intellectual powers were not matched by his personality. For all this intellectual precocity, in the sphere of human relations Orme showed himself to be singularly inept. His disagreements with his sister flared up into a scandal which was nearly the end of him, while his involvement in Madras politics only succeeded in alienating most of the community. By the time he left Madras, Orme had made himself deeply unpopular with nearly all the inhabitants: so much so that there was even talk of his behaviour being reported to the Directors in the General Letter.[67] The determination and ambition, which inspired Orme's studies and literary undertakings was to be a major factor in Orme's pursuit of success in the years ahead. However, they did not compensate for the flaws in his personality, and indeed in the years to come they served only to exacerbate them.

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67 IOL. Eur. Mss. G.37, Box 21, E. Maskelyne - R. Clive, April 19 1753.

CHAPTER II

The Madras Years: An Opportunity Wasted (1753-1758)

In October 1753 the "Pelham" reached England. After more than a decade abroad Orme had returned home, now an ambitious young man of 23. The author of the "Account of his Life" tells us that he had made the voyage at the request of his favourite aunt, Mrs Adams. Orme's contemporaries however, had little doubt that his main purpose in returning home had been to further his career. His travelling companion Clive remarked of him afterwards: "I find by experience that a man is not the further from preferment by paying a visit to his native country."[1] Orme did stay with his Aunt Adams in Cavendish Square, despite his long absence abroad, he was to stay in England for barely 6 months.

Orme arrived home determined to make the most of his Indian experience. He made great use of the knowledge which he had acquired out in India to project himself as an authority on Indian customs, institutions and political conditions. In particular, he made every effort to circulate his writings as widely as possible in order to build up his reputation. Consequently Orme found himself widely regarded as an important source of information on India and Indian affairs.[2] It was by this means that he managed to secure an introduction to Lord Holdernesse, then Secretary of State for the Southern Department and the man with responsibility for Indian affairs.

Robert D'Arcy, 4th Earl of Holdernesse, was a member of the Henry Pelham Ministry. In June 1751 he had succeeded the Duke of Bedford at the Southern Department. Holdernesse was a highly experienced and respected political figure who enjoyed influence at the highest levels. He had been Ambassador to Venice in 1744, in 1749 he had been the Plenipotentiary Minister to the United Provinces and in 1751 he had been made a member of the Privy Council. He was also very close to the King. He had once been one of the Lords of the King's Bed-

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1 Quoted in Sir George Forrest, **Life of Lord Clive** (1918), vol.1, pp.228-9.

2 **Fragments**, p.xiii.

Chamber and had been with George II at the battle of Dettingen in 1743. In later years George was to entrust him with the education of his sons.

Orme went to great pains to represent himself to Holdernesse as an expert on Indian affairs. To this purpose he made maximum use of the draft of his **History**[3] and his other writings to impress Holdernese with his knowledge. Indeed, he presented Holdernesse with a special copy of his dissertation on the "General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan" soon after his arrival.[4] Orme's actions must have had the desired effect, for later that year Holdernesse asked Orme to write a paper giving his opinions on the prospective Treaty of London, which was to resolve the differences between the English and French in India. Orme set to work with a will and by the end of the year he had completed a detailed study of the differences between the two Companies and the steps needed to resolve them.[5]

After his experience of Dupleix's ambitions, Orme, like many other Company servants, was profoundly suspicious of French intentions in India. Given the French record in the Carnatic War he feared that their commercial interests only cloaked more sinister territorial ambitions:

> It has been proved that the French were the aggressors in the present war of Carnatica. An impartial narrative of their Transactions, cannot but create the persuasion, that under the pretext of securing the rights and advantages of the commerce of the Company, their intent was no less than to add Provinces in Asia to the Dominion of their Monarch.[6]

Given this fact, Orme argued that the aim of any future agreements should be to try and prevent the French from fulfilling their ambitions of conquest.

> It is therefore natural that the English should suspect the good faith of their Rivals in every article of the proposals which these may make in their present treaty, and bind them up to the incapacity of

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3 OV. 59 p.1.

4 Leeds Papers, B.L. Egerton Mss. 3489, ff.1-35.

5 India II, pp.317-37.

6 Ibid. p.317.

> resuming in the views which it may be imagined, they quit not but with regret.[7]

To guard against any resurgence of these territorial ambitions Orme put forward five cardinal points which should be embodied in any future treaty.

First of all, he proposed that any new acquisitions made by either the French or the English in the Carnatic should be of equal size and should yield an equal revenue.[8] In his second point, Orme emphasised how important it was to ensure that Muhammad Ali was confirmed in the position in which he had been established by the English: as Nawab of the Carnatic and Trichinopoli.[9] This, felt Orme, was absolutely necessary because all the principal rulers in the region were either openly or secretly hostile to Muhammad Ali. Thus there was every danger that he would be overthrown if left to fight it out alone, and that the resulting animosities would once again embroil the English with the French.[10] Orme's third proviso centred around the influence which the French exercised over Salabat Jang, the Nizam of the Deccan. It was imperative, he argued, that the French agree not to give any kind of military assistance to the Nizam.[11] Moreover, they had to promise not to maintain either at the Nizam's court or at any other place outside the Carnatic, any more Europeans than were strictly necessary to service an ordinary factory. In his fourth point, Orme underlined how important it was to ensure that the French should possess no territory at Masulipatam or any other place on the coast north of Madras. [12] His main reason for this was the ease of communication between Masulipatam and the Nizam's court at Golconda; thus a French base at Masulipatam meant a nearer and much more immediate French influence over the Nizam.[13] Orme's final safeguard was that Trichinopoli should be handed over to Mysore as had previously

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. pp.317-18.

9 Ibid. p.318.

10 Ibid. p.323.

11 Ibid. p.324.

12 Ibid. p.327.

13 Ibid. pp.327-8.

been promised by Muhammad Ali.[14] During the war with Chanda Sahib and the French, Muhammad Ali had agreed to cede the town to the Mysoreans in return for military support. Once the immediate danger had passed Muhammad Ali changed his mind and refused to give up the town. By doing so he had alienated his most powerful neighbour. Orme prophesied war with Mysore in the Carnatic unless they could placate the Mysoreans by forcing the Nawab to honour his promise.[15] Given the potentially disastrous consequences of such a war, Orme felt that the necessity of appeasing Mysore was almost as important as establishing Muhammad Ali as Nawab of Arcot.[16]

Orme's study is an impressive piece of work. In it he shows a detailed knowledge and a sound grasp of the geographical, political and military realities of the Indian situation. In what was later to become one of the hallmarks of his historical style, the information provided is meticulously researched down to the very last detail. In his analysis of Masulipatam, for example, Orme even goes to the length of estimating the commercial trade of the town and forecasting the number of soldiers which the surrounding areas could maintain. Orme handles this wealth of detail with great skill and argues forcefully and plausibly. Almost all his arguments, for example, are backed up by very sound reasoning. In short, the paper underlines his very considerable powers of analysis and argument; almost every possible eventuality is investigated and carefully reasoned out.

Although the impact of his arguments on the Treaty of London negotiations is not quite so clear cut, they certainly impressed Holdernesse, who was left in no doubt as to Orme's ability and knowledge of Indian affairs.

> I am persuaded that upon experience of his (Orme's) merit you will be glad of the opportunity of making a friendship with one whose natural ability and acquired knowledge in the affairs of the India Company will at once afford you an agreeable and useful companion.[17]

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14 Ibid. p.332.

15 Ibid. p.334.

16 Ibid. pp.334-5.

17 B.L. Egerton Mss. 3488, Holdernesse - Colonel Scott, April 3 1754, f.3.

In Holdernesse, Orme found he had made an invaluable ally, one who was prepared to go to considerable lengths to promote his interests.

> I never let slip an opportunity of mentioning you to my friend Drake, and shall be watchful to push your interests with him, or any other of the Directors with whom I can have any degree of influence and I am in hopes they will not be so blind to their own interest, as not to reward your merit equal to your just expectations.[18]

The friend referred to was Roger Drake,[19] then Deputy Chairman and later Chairman of the Court of Directors. Holdernesse must have quickly won over Drake to his way of thinking, for within a short time Drake too was recommending Orme to such men as Stringer Lawrence, the Company's military commander at Madras. During this time Orme was also befriended by John Payne,[20] another Director who was destined to become an influential figure in Company politics. Drake and Payne had been on close terms for several years and although Payne was also known to Orme's friend Benjamin Robins, Robins had died out in India in 1751 and it was probably through Drake that Orme first became acquainted with him.

In February 1754 Orme was put up for the post of seventh member in Council at Fort St. George.[21] Given his previous ranking as a junior Bengal servant this new appointment represented an enormous step up the ladder. Moreover, it was almost unheard of for ordinary Company servants to be able to transfer so easily from one Presidency to another. In order to make this move Orme clearly must have been able to command great influence within and without the Company. Indeed it could only have been through the combined efforts of Holdernesse, Roger Drake and John Payne that Orme could possibly have achieved this unprecedented promotion. This was not all; he was also named as one of the five Commissaries who were to handle the negotiations for the Provisional Treaty out in India.[22] Once he had secured his appointment, Orme wasted little time in England. Clearly he felt that his interests

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18 Ibid. Holdernesse - Orme, March 29 1754, f.1.

19 J.G. Parker, " Directors of the East India Company 1754-1790," Edinburgh Ph.D Thesis (1977), pp.92-3.

20 Ibid. pp.199-201.

21 IOR. Court Minutes, B/75/65 p.587.

22 IOR. Madras Dispatches, E/4/861, p.269.

and career lay out in India, for by the first week of April he was already on a ship bound for Madras.[23]

Aside from its personal aspects, Orme's relationship with Holdernesse (which he was careful to maintain during his time in India) also has a larger significance. One of the most important concerns voiced in the early drafts of Orme's **History** was the importance of Indian trade and commerce and the threat which was posed to it by France's territorial ambitions.[24] This fear was very much echoed in Orme's draft memorandum for the Treaty of London, where almost every proposal was dominated by fear of the French threat. All the signs are that these arguments made their mark on Holdernesse and had the effect of bringing him round to Orme's point of view. By 1755, he too had become convinced that it was beyond the power of the Company alone to carry on the war with the French.

> I am too sensible of the consequence of our Trade to India to suffer it to be diminished, much less lost, if any diligence of mine can save it.....I will not neglect the child I have nursed, and I will do my utmost either to procure a safe peace in India or to fall upon the means of carrying on the war with Honour and success.[25]

With such a powerful conduit for his opinions, Orme, one feels, must have played an influential role in reinforcing the government's willingness to intervene in India. Although he cannot be given all the credit for this, it seems clear that the government's decision during the 1750s to commit increased military and naval resources to the struggle in India must surely have owed something to the influence of individuals like Orme.

On the voyage out to Madras, Orme became acquainted with Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Heron. Heron had exchanged the King's service for that of the East India Company and was travelling out to replace Colonel Scott, who had died recently, as the Company's Field Commander. The two men took to each other and had become firm friends by the time their ship reached Madras. They

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23 Egerton Mss. 3488, Holdernesse - Col Scott, April 3 1754, f.3.

24 India II, p.379.

25 Egerton Mss.3488, Holdernesse - Orme, Oct. 14 1755, f.96.

arrived at Madras on the 12th September 1754.[26] Orme, as seventh member in Council was given the post of Export Warehouse Keeper and appointed Commissioner for the Nawab's Account. Heron, as the new military commander, was appointed the third member and in October took over from Stringer Lawrence as commander of the field force.

However, Orme's arrival back in Madras was not an immediately happy experience for him. He found that his unprecedented promotion over the heads of his seniors had not been well received in Madras. In fact it had made him highly unpopular. The sensitive Orme was only too aware of this general resentment and felt it very keenly.

> You (Orme) are but young but you are not sufficiently so, to be surprised at finding yourself looked upon coldly, by these people who look upon your Promotion as an injury to them. This must be the case whilst men are men; for so long as they will have passions and resentments....Yet as I said before, an Equal moderate conduct making just allowances for human frailties; and time, which changes all things will take away the resentments.[27]

He was also still troubled by the lingering effects of his previous quarrel with Governor Saunders.[28] By now Saunders was quite convinced that Orme had tried to malign him and confronted him soon after his return.[29] Although Saunders was due to return home in the near future, Orme remained uneasy over the damaging reports which might be spread of him back in England. He resolved to give him no further cause for offence. In fact he went even further and in the last few months of his Governorship made a point of agreeing with Saunders on every public measure which he proposed.[30]

As a Commissary, Orme was involved almost immediately in the Treaty negotiations which were taking place between Madras and Pondicherry. By

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26 H.D. Love, **Vestiges of Old Madras**, (1913), vol.2, p.437.

27 OV. 289, H. Speke - Orme, Sept 22 1755, pp.67-8.

28 Ibid. p.67.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid. Sept. 18 1754, p.64.

November these had run into difficulty over the French refusal to give up their acquisitions on the northern part to the Coromandel Coast. As before, Orme continued to view French intentions with great scepticism. He did not think that force of reason alone would induce the French to compromise. The 2,400 recruits which had just been sent to Pondicherry suggested the very opposite to him. As he saw it, the situation could only be resolved by military intervention from England.[31] However his misgivings proved unfounded. On the 31st December Saunders and Godeheu, Dupleix's successor, were able to agree on a Provisional Treaty.

Although the articles of the Provisional Treaty[32] are completely different in form to Orme's own paper, they contained many of the points which he himself had made. The very first article, for example, enshrined the principle of non involvement and non interference in all local governments and disputes.[33] This was also the guiding premise behind many of Orme's arguments. He too was keen to ensure that the French stop supporting Salabat Jang, and even more concerned to ensure that there were no further disputes which could embroil the European powers. Article three of the Treaty stipulated that the territories of Pondicherry should be made equal to those of Fort St. George.[34] This echoed almost exactly the point of Orme's first proviso. The possible use of Masulipatam by the French, which Orme was so concerned about, was also dealt with in the Provisional Treaty. Its fourth article concerned itself with the neutralization of the Masulipatam area, with each company being restricted to only one factory and an equal number of soldiers to guard it.[35] Although we cannot trace the extent of Orme's influence over the negotiations, he was indeed actively involved in them as a Commissary and it is clear that there were in fact, strong resemblances between Orme's original suggestions and the content of the Treaty.

Orme played a very active role in the daily administration of the Presidency and took on a number of tasks and duties. In addition to his job as

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31 OV. 17, Orme - Holdernesse, Nov. 9 1754, p.141.

32 IOR. Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 93, pp.244-50.

33 Ibid. pp.244-5.

34 Ibid. pp.245-6.

35 Ibid. pp.246-7.

Export Warehouse Keeper, he was also appointed to a six man Committee of Accounts, which had been set up to investigate various financial irregularities within the Company.[36] Together with another fellow councillor, Alexander Wynch, Orme was also deputed to prepare a report on the new hospital accommodation which had recently been put up in Madras.[37] The settlement surgeon, Andrew Munroe, had been complaining about the lack of accommodation at the Fort St. George hospital since 1750. His complaints had resulted in the acquisition of twelve new houses for further expansion. The new buildings however, attracted even more complaints and the two Councillors had been appointed to look into the matter. Orme and Wynch found conditions extremely unsatisfactory.[38] Due to the defects in the new building the sick were frequently left exposed to the excesses of the weather. The hospital itself also suffered from a lack of basic supplies and was generally found to be run in a very disorganized fashion.

Orme performed these varied tasks diligently and efficiently. The zeal with which he flung himself into his duties suggests that he was determined to prove himself as a competent bureaucrat and administrator. On this front he seems to have succeeded and his efforts attracted the notice of both those at Madras and back in England. Orme's most notable triumph was his reorganization of the Presidency's accounts for the year 1754-5. The books at Madras and her subordinate factories had been maintained in a very irregular and confused manner. Orme and his two assistants, James Alexander and Thomas Pelling, went to great lengths to rectify most of the mistakes and ended up giving the accounts a complete overhaul. They prepared a complete account of the expenses and revenues at the settlement and the subordinate factories at Fort St. David, Injarám, Vizagapatam and Madapollam.[39] Orme had these accounts divided into three sections. The first section listed all the expenses for the settlement and its subordinates and compared them with those for the previous year, calculating the increase or the decrease. The second section investigated the reasons for the increase in expenses at each settlement, looking in

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36 **Calendar of Madras Dispatches 1754 - 1765**, Ed. H.H. Dodwell (Madras, 1930) p.36.

37 **Love, Vestiges of Old Madras**, vol.2, pp.454-5.

38 Ibid. pp.455-6.

39 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book 1756**, Ed. B.S. Baliga, (Madras, 1943), pp.51-6.

detail at the various charges - garrison expenses, hospital expenses, wages etc., etc. The third section looked in detail at the various revenues of the respective settlements, again comparing the increase or decrease with the previous year. Orme's conclusion was that there had been a total increase in expenses of 45,137 Pagodas while there had been a total decrease on revenue of 3,936 Pagodas for the year.[40] It was a clear headed and well organised assessment and its method made a great impression on both the Directors at home[41] and the Council in Madras,[42] both of whom were full of praise for Orme and his assistants.

Despite all this activity, Orme still felt that his position in the settlement had not improved a great deal. Highly conscious of his own importance, he was a vain and somewhat arrogant figure. An anecdote told of him at this time comments acerbically on his haughty and somewhat overbearing manner.

> When Mr. Orme held the office of export warehouse keeper to the East India Company at Madras, he was remarkable for keeping the young men in the service at a sufficient distance. It happened that one Mr. Davison acted under him in his office, in whose blunt John Bull manners there appeared something odd and diverting. The former had condescended to invite the latter to breakfast with him, in the course of which he asked Davison of what profession his father was? "A Sadler, Sir" replied the other. "A Sadler !" repeated the historian with some degree of surprise; "Why did he not breed you up a Sadler ?" "Why, Sir" says Davison, "I was always a whimsical boy, and rather chose to try my fortune as you have done in the East India Company's service. But pray Sir," continued he, "What profession was your father of!" "My father Sir," answered Orme sharply," was a Gentleman." "A Gentleman ! humph - Pray, Sir, be so good as to inform me why he did not breed you up a Gentleman."[43]

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40 Ibid. p.51.

41 **Madras Calendar**, p.51.

42 Ibid. p.118.

43 **Love, Vestiges of Old Madras**, vol.2, p.423.

A very independent and highly self-opinionated figure, Orme as one would expect, found the closed and tight knit mould of Madras politics very difficult to fit into: "Where the majority decide, where argument is deemed presumption, where manners are exploded and where application is ridiculed. It is making too great a sacrifice to be acceptable."[44]

Given his profound sense of self importance and the arrogant manner in which he often behaved, it is hardly surprising that Orme was the target of vicious rumours. One of these had spread as far as Fort St. David and was repeated to him by a trusted friend, Henry Speke, who was the Captain of Admiral Watson's flagship. Apparently Orme was rumoured to have been involved in a conspiracy to debase the Madras currency along with Lingachitty, one of the Company's merchants. Having discovered Lingachitty's attempts to debase the Madras Pagoda, Orme was said to have had his mouth stopped by a bribe of 4,000 Pagodas.[45] Speke was not able to trace the origins of these rumours but he had his suspicions: "I fear you are originally obliged to some of your good friends of Madras." [46] What he did know was that the natives had been insisting for some time that there had been a great debasement of the Star Pagoda. In the circumstances, the best thing for Orme to do he suggested, was to have some of the Pagodas melted down. This way he would be able to discover the truth of the allegations and if true, take steps to remedy them.[47]

Early in 1755 the Poligars of the Districts of Madura and Tinnevelli refused to pay rents which they owed to the Nawab and rebelled against him. Muhammad Ali petitioned the Company for help. The Council at Madras saw in this request the chance to collect some of the monies owed them by the Nawab and, in February, Orme's friend Alexander Heron was dispatched with an army to subdue the Poligars and collect the rents. Heron carried out this task so unsuccessfully that he was recalled and charged with breaching his orders and misappropriating funds.[48] He was suspended from the Council and sentenced to be court-martialled. Orme's

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44 OV. 17, Orme - Holdernesse, March 11 1755, p.263.

45 OV. 289, H. Speke - Orme, July 8 1755, p.95.

46 Ibid. July 18 1755, p.99.

47 Ibid. pp.99-100.

48 **Love, Vestiges of Old Madras**, vol.2, p.576.

ties with Heron had remained close ever since their arrival in India and the two men had been in constant touch throughout the campaign. Heron valued Orme's friendship and trusted him enough to let him act as his agent in Madras.[49] Even on the verge of his court martial it was still to Orme that he looked for advice and support: "It shall be my particular care never to do a thing that can affect you to your prejudice so I shall observe your directions." [50] Whatever impression Orme may have given his friend, he himself had no intention of standing by a losing cause. As he had shown in his behaviour towards De Gingens, Orme had few scruples about deserting his friends should need arise. He abandoned Heron at the very last moment and joined enthusiastically in the chorus of condemnation.

> From my observations on the Extravagant spirit of the prosecution ..... it is as well their rage fell on a man who has behaved so vilely as Heron has done. His crimes will almost sanctify any punishment.[51]

Heron was found guilty on two counts. Steps were also taken to prosecute him in the Mayor's Court for the monies he had misused. Heron, however, on hearing the sentence, slipped out of Madras and took refuge with the French.

During this time Orme remained buoyed up by his hopes of further promotion. His friend Drake was now Chairman and with John Payne now Deputy Chairman, he had everything to hope for. Indeed this was the impression which he received from London:

> I was told here in great confidence that letters from London by last year's ships brought accounts of your having come out high in council to Madras and that it was not intended you should be long without rising higher.[52]

The news of Clive's appointment as Deputy Governor of Fort St. David with the right of succession to Madras came as a great shock to him. Clive's job, he felt, should

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49 OV. 48, A Heron - Orme, June 7 1755, p.56.

50 Ibid. Sept. 11 1755, p.46.

51 OV. 28, Orme - J Payne, Oct. 26 1755, p.20.

52 OV. 289, J. Foulis - Orme, May 12 1755, p.25.

have been his. He felt betrayed and wrote to his patron Holdernesse, complaining bitterly that he had been let down.[53]

Clive's much heralded return to India was part of a plan for striking a further blow at French power in India. Although Dupleix had been dismissed in August 1754, his most able commander, Charles de Bussy, had built up a strong French influence in the Deccan. The source of this was a grant of territory which he had obtained, known as the Northern Circars, along the coast between Bengal and the Carnatic. It was therefore intended that the English would help the Marathas to attack Salabat Jang and thus scare him into breaking with the French. Clive was intended to command this expedition. For this purpose it was arranged that he should take with him to India three companies of artillery and three or four hundred of the King's troops. This force had to reach Bombay from where the main attack was to be launched, with a secondary thrust coming from Madras.

The Madras view of the joint expedition was not very enthusiastic. The prevalent opinion on the Council was that they could not give an opinion on the feasibility of the expedition or the means of carrying it out because they did not have enough information. Orme however disagreed. Although the Council could not make an absolute answer, provisionally, he said, they could surely give an opinion.[54] He was supported by the majority and requested to explain himself further, with the result that the Council agreed that a letter should be written to Bombay.[55] The letter however, was written in such a superficial manner that it was clearly of no use to anyone. Orme, resuming the subject a few days later, pointed this out. He emphasised that it did not really contemplate any regular plan of operations and offered to write a paper setting out his own opinions.[56]

Orme's paper[57] was as well argued and well presented as his previous memorandum for Lord Holdernesse. In it he came up with an ingenious method of neutralising the French threat without infringing the current truce. Persuasive as ever,

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53 OV. 17, Orme - Holdernesse, Oct. 26 1755, p.285.

54 Ibid. Orme - Holdernesse, March 1 1756, p.287.

55 Ibid. p.289.

56 Ibid. p.290.

57 Ibid. "Letter From the Presidency of Bombay to the Presidency of Bombay." pp.307-12.

Orme began by detailing the advantages which the French derived from supporting Salabat Jang and keeping him on his throne.[58] These advantages were manifold; the French were not only able to maintain their troops at a quite exorbitant rate of pay, they also possessed enough territorial resources to make them masters of three or four provinces. This would enable them to maintain armies out in India without damaging their capital in Europe. Moreover, by the situation of their territories they also had the power to exclude all the other Europeans from the better half of the Coromandel cloth trade. These potential dangers he emphasised, could only be nullified by removing the French influence at Golconda.

Orme observed that at present they were restrained from coming to open hostilities until the intentions of their superiors were known. However, he also pointed out that the present peace was therefore conditional and given the state of affairs in Europe, as likely not to be ratified as to be ratified.[59] Now, should the French be deceiving them, he argued, which considering their past experience of them was only too likely, the English would have no excuse if war did break out for not having done everything in their power to prevent the consequences.[60]

The first stage of Orme's plan of operations recommended an alliance with the Maratha leader. Considering the injuries which the Marathas had suffered at the hands of the French in the past, Orme felt that this could be accomplished quite easily.[61] The Marathas were then to be instructed to present the dangers of the French alliance as forcefully as they could to Salabat Jang.[62] On an imaginary pretext, the English were to join forces with the Marathas and advance to Salabat Jang's borders.[63] Orme felt that this would have the effect of convincing the Nizam that there was a power behind all this which would reduce him to reason. He was also sure that the Nizam's officers greatly resented the costly presence of the French and that this would aggravate them further. The Marathas were then to insist on the

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58 Ibid. p.308.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid. p.309.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid. pp.309-10.

removal of the French from Golconda, while the English remained out of sight.[64] Their next move was to press for the removal of the French troops in exchange for the withdrawal of the English forces.[65] Given the dissatisfaction of the Nizam's officers, Orme hoped that this would pressure Salabat Jang into a decision. In this way Orme argued, they would be able to avoid a confrontation unless the Nizam was really determined to come to blows.[66] By the time a plan of this nature was ready to be carried out, they would have received orders from Europe one way or another. If it was peace, Orme emphasised that they would have done nothing to infringe the treaty. If on the other hand it was war, they would already have laid the foundation for the first stroke.[67]

The paper was submitted to the Council on the 23rd November and was accepted after some delay, which Orme with characteristic impatience blamed on the Governor, "who is a slow man and not fond of the reasoning of others." [68] However, they did not receive an answer for quite some time. In fact it was not until well into the next year that Madras heard any news at all, by which time the Bombay Council had already decided to direct the expedition against Tulaji Angria, the pirate ruler of a neighbouring territory along the coast. The Madras scheme, replied the Bombay Council, was too risky and quite improper on account of the treaties which already existed, not to mention the expectation of a firm peace between France and England. Orme, not unnaturally, was furious: "The infirmities of human nature will ever tinge all our actions, but it is deplorable where they poison resolutions of such glorious importance." [69] He was convinced that the Bombay decision was motivated by a desire to keep all the credit for themselves, whereas in an expedition to the Deccan they would have been forced to share it with Madras. Orme despaired to see yet another opportunity so utterly wasted. To turn an expedition against the Angria, who was as much an enemy of the French as the English, rather than deal with a rival

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64 Ibid. p.310.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid. p.311.

68 OV. 17, Orme - Holdernesse, March 1 1755, p.290.

69 Ibid. p.291.

who threatened the very existence of the English, was in his eyes a hopelessly quixotic gesture.[70] No one could possibly hope to justify it. It led him to despair of all important causes, if they depended on agents in India.

> A man or something like a man in the chair at Bombay would perhaps have saved the Indies. And a less inactive spirit in the Government of Madras might have urged the Presidency of Bombay to obey our call.[71]

In line with his earlier thinking, Orme's memorandum was moved by his apprehensions of another war with France. As such he was profoundly disturbed by the failure to confront what he saw as the real issue, the French threat to India. It made him very uneasy about the way in which the Company's interests were being handled by its servants out in India. The letter also shows that, although still only a rather junior member of the Council, Orme was starting to play an increasingly important role in Madras politics. Everyone evidently deferred to his superior literary abilities and as we can see, his arguments were beginning to carry a great deal of weight in Council. Yet for Orme this was not enough. Conscious of his superior talents, what he wanted above all, was a position of authority where his abilities would be given full rein and he could look after the Company's interests as they deserved to be. However, the longer he had to wait the more frustrated and resentful he became.

> If the Company will not admit me to the succession of Bombay nor dignify me with greater authority here ..... they will hear such descriptions, as they will wish they had rather enabled me to amend than represent.[72]

Orme's frustration found its outlet in a series of confidential reports, informing on his contemporaries on the Council, which he began compiling for his friend, the Director John Payne. It was a fateful step. Orme himself was not blind to the risk he was running and fully realised the possible consequences of his actions.

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70 Ibid. p.292.

71 Ibid. p.293.

72 Ibid. March 11 1755 pp.263-4.

> I should be called a Spy and an Informer, Characters bad enough in themselves, but which in their Acceptation here doom the Person who is branded with them to Infamy exceeded not by the worst which was ever suffered by the Public Executioner.[73]

Nevertheless, his sense of obligation to Payne and above all his own ambition overrode all other considerations. However, he begged Payne to keep his reports secret and to show them to no one except Drake.

The Madras settlement was in Orme's opinion a place ruled by favouritism and faction. He regarded Governor Saunders as the best man in the administration, although he was plagued by the opposition he constantly encountered to his measures.[74] Orme focused the blame for this on Stringer Lawrence and his supporters. In Orme's eyes Lawrence was a vain and choleric figure, easily led by flatterers and hangers-on:

> He is accessible, sadly accessible, from the side of his vanity, which indulges itself in frequent and honourable commemoration of his Exploits. Every designing man under him had the recommendation of himself in his own Power by his behaviour to his General.[75]

He described the ascendency which had been gained over the settlement by the Lawrence-Palk faction. Robert Palk, a clergyman and a man of considerable standing in the community, had been bought over by Lawrence and now the two of them dominated the settlement.

> The influence which I have above described Mr. Palk to have over the greatest part of the community of which he is the Pastor, shone forth eminently now in their notions of the Governor. Mr Palk blamed him, all the world did so too. Mr. Palk gave witness to a more than Heroic Character in Colonel Lawrence: He became immediately a Hero of the first order.[76]

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73 OV. 28, Orme - J. Payne, Oct. 26 1755 pp.1-2.

74 Ibid. p.4.

75 Ibid. p.5.

76 Ibid. p.8.

Palk was the only clergyman ever to have held any sort of office. It was, as far as Orme and everyone else was concerned, an extraordinary state of affairs. Anyone who was not acceptable to these two had little, if any hope of getting a good post. Charles Boddam, for instance, another senior member of the Council, was forced to relinquish the post of Victualling Contractor to the Army in favour of a much more junior member, Alexander Wynch, on account of the antagonism of Palk.[77] Similarly, Lawrence's personal prejudices against Captain Campbell, his second in command, had had the result of denying him his Major's commission. Instead it was passed onto his junior, Kilpatrick, who was a personal favourite of Lawrence's.[78]

Orme's decision to support Saunders and work with him did not endear him to either Lawrence or Palk. Palk, whom Orme had known since his first stay in India actually stopped speaking to him. It meant that he was passed over for posts for which he was eminently qualified.

> Mr. Saunders thought it was necessary to send a person to Mr. Godeheu to explain his meaning on the provisional treaty. He afterwards told me he did not mention me because of the aversion which would appear against it.[79]

However, Orme felt that he had succeeded in winning over other more independent members of the Council, such as Henry Powney and John Smith.

In January 1755 Thomas Saunders had resigned the Governorship to embark for England. He was replaced by George Pigot, another old Madras hand. Orme's opinion of the new Governor was an extremely high one. Although at first he had been rather wary of the great deference which Pigot showed towards Lawrence,[80] Orme found himself agreeing with his ideas. Although Pigot too had at first been quite distant, their relations gradually improved and Orme came to value and respect his opinions.[81] Orme prophesied a difficult twelve months ahead for the new Governor, for just when it seemed that matters were going to go smoothly

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77 Ibid. p.9.

78 Ibid. pp.10-11.

79 Ibid. p.14.

80 Ibid. p.16.

81 Ibid. p.17.

the Company appointed Palk to the Select Committee. Orme blamed Palk for much of the factionalism which had dogged Saunders' governorship and despaired to see him so crucially involved with the new administration: "The only man who had secretly led the operations of confusion was openly admitted to a share in the discussion of them." [82] As he saw it, the only course which now lay ahead for Pigot was either to follow the dictates of men like these who were biased on most issues, or to oppose them and risk making dangerous enemies.[83]

It was to this internecine feuding and faction fighting that Orme attributed the failure to concentrate on the real problems facing the British in India. For example, he was deeply critical of the fact that the British had not taken advantage of the truce to try and buy Salabat Jang over to their side. Similarly, he saw very little being done to try and heal the breach with Mysore during the vital breathing-space.[84] Instead he saw things drifting along aimlessly without any fixed plan, with the British in India being content to patch up any problems with the nearest expedient at hand,[85] while they concentrated on their petty, personal preoccupations. As a lone figure, Orme felt powerless himself. He could not hope to implement his opinions without forcing an open conflict. In the circumstances, he felt that the best thing he could do was to keep quiet.[86] So he steeled himself to endure many of the slights which he imagined were flung in his way and resolved to carry on supporting the Governor, whatever the cost.[87]

The issue of the tribute due to the Nawab from the Madura and Tinnevelli districts had still not been fully resolved. Accordingly, a new expedition was launched early in 1755 and the Nawab was prevailed on to accompany it. This undertaking was more successful and the British were able to reach a settlement over the revenues. This done, the expedition moved on to Arcot where all the chiefs of the Province were summoned to pay their tributes to the Nawab. Awed by this show

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82 Ibid. p.19.

83 Ibid. pp.22-3.

84 Ibid. p.26.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid. p.24.

87 Ibid. p.25.

of strength, most of them complied. There was one exception: Murtaza Ali, the Faujdar of Vellore, the richest chief in the province. The English force, under Major James Kilpatrick marched against Vellore but found it too strong to attack; Kilpatrick, in an attempt to intimidate the Faujdar, encamped outside the walls. Murtaza Ali, however, refused to be intimidated and summoning the French to his aid, threatened a general outbreak of hostilities. Finding that Kilpatrick still had no intention of withdrawing, he apparently had a change of heart and allowed his Vakil to make overtures for peace. It was a complicated and difficult situation, demanding negotiating skills of the highest order. It says a great deal for his contemporaries' confidence in him that Orme, by virtue of his knowledge of "Moors" or "Hindustani" seemed the ideal candidate, and he was sent out almost immediately on February 8th.[88]

On the 9th February the Faujdar, finding that the English army still remained under his walls, came to a settlement. He agreed to pay 1,000 Pagodas plus another 25,000 Rupees for the removal of the troops. As a sign of his good faith he paid 20,000 Rupees on the spot.[89] The Committee immediately ratified the treaty and returned it. Orme's arrival, however, led Murtaza Ali to believe that he could get even better terms. He had in the meantime also heard from the French. Thus on the 11th February he refused to fulfil the agreement he made days earlier with Kilpatrick. Orme, who had arrived in camp on the same day, sent word to Murtaza Ali that as the business he had come for had been concluded he could not interfere and left Arcot at once. Murtaza Ali reacted by refusing to treat with anyone but Orme. Orme therefore returned and agreed to meet with Murtaza Ali on the 15th.[90]

Orme brought with him four witnesses, with whom Murtaza Ali had initially made the agreement, in an effort to make him honour it. With unabashed composure Murtaza Ali denied that he had ever made any agreement or even that he had ever talked to anybody. One of Orme's four witnesses, the commander of

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88 **Madras Calendar**, p.41.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid. p.42.

Sepoys, reacted furiously to these barefaced lies, almost endangering the lives of the whole party.[91] When things had calmed down, Orme continued with his questions. If he had no intention of making a settlement, why then, he asked, had the Faujdar paid out 20,000 Rupees to this very man on the day of Orme's arrival.[92] Murtaza Ali evaded the implication of Orme's question, merely saying that all he had done was to put some money in a bag and order it to be distributed amongst the troops.[93] Orme found him willing to pay a much lesser sum, maybe a quarter or half of what he had originally promised Kilpatrick. However, after some consideration, he judged that in the interests of his commission he could not afford to be seen climbing down from the original offer.[94] He insisted that it was either all or nothing. Murtaza Ali in his turn insisted that Orme should write to the Council at Madras and urge his terms. Orme, however, was not to be moved. He replied instead that he would write to Fort St. David and ask for the King's regiment to move.[95] When the Faujdar said that this would only force him to take the French into his capital, Orme was ready with his final riposte. The Faujdar, he said, knew the French far too well to take this step, which was the very one they would wish for.[96] With these words Orme left for Madras. Kilpatrick remained a little longer but on February 24th he too left Vellore and returned to Arcot with the army.

The conference itself had lasted almost an entire week. It had taxed Orme's diplomacy and nerve to the very limit: "I found this man the very Pigmalion in Cambray's Telemachus. His principal favourite is the man who murdered Subder Ally Khan." [97] Yet he had risen to the challenge and kept his wits and his nerve, often in very threatening circumstances. Indeed the whole episode shows Orme in a very different light, as an astute and cool-headed politician. The encounters with the Faujdar certainly made a deep impression on Orme, for Murtaza Ali is one of the

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91 OV.17, Orme - Holdernesse, March 1 1756, pp.302-3.

92 Ibid. p.303.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid. pp.303-4.

95 Ibid. p.304.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

few Indian characters in the **History** who was treated with any degree of depth. He was shown as the personification of evil itself and Orme's portrait dwelt significantly on his cunning and treacherous nature.[98]

Orme's experience with Murtaza Ali stood him in good stead. Several months later in May he was nominated to handle the negotiations in progress with Mysore over Trichinopoli.[99] The ownership of Trichinopoli had been a sore point between the Company and Mysore ever since the end of the Carnatic War. Recently however, the Mysoreans had made several efforts to purchase the town. The Company saw this as an ideal opportunity to secure the alliance of Mysore and at the same time recover the monies which had been loaned to the Nawab. The utmost secrecy had to be maintained, however, for it was imperative that the Nawab did not suspect anything before the details had been finalised. It is a sign of the esteem in which Orme's negotiating skills were held that he was thought to be the best man to conduct these important and highly delicate negotiations. He was instructed that Trichinopoli was not to be given up until the Mysoreans had come up with a sum equal to the whole of the Nawab's debt.[100] For the best part of 1756 Orme maintained a secret correspondence with Venkata Rao, the Vakil at the court of Mysore. In November he actually journeyed to Mysore for further discussions but the negotiations failed to produce a worthwhile result.[101]

The negotiations continued all through 1757 and Orme found his position becoming more and more complicated as the Nawab's suspicions began to increase. To disarm these suspicions Orme resorted to complex series of subterfuges. He convinced Muhammad Ali that what he really wanted was to exchange the southern counties of Madura and Tinnevelli in return for additional concessions in the Arcot province.[102] The real negotiations with Mysore he kept hidden from the Nawab, intending not to reveal anything until the agreement was actually

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98 **History** vol.1, p.46.

99 **Madras Calendar**, p.67.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid. p.91.

102 OV.28, Orme - J. Payne, Nov. 17 1757, p.217.

concluded.[103] This ensured that, even if the Company did not come to terms with Mysore, they would still be able to extract the maximum concessions from the Nawab, who fearing Mysorean competition would naturally come to offer more and more.[104] Orme did have his reservations about such duplicity but he recognised that it was an essential feature of Indian politics: "I know not whether such Double Dealing may square with the Politics of Europe but in Asia, nothing but dissimulation will do." [105] Despite all Orme's efforts, in the end the negotiations failed to amount to anything and although the Company did eventually receive an offer of 30 lakhs from Venkata Rao, it was a case of too little too late.

In March 1756 Orme received the news he had been waiting for. He was to be promoted from the position of seventh in Council to that of third in Council.[106] Clearly his efforts to make a name for himself out in Madras had not gone unnoticed back home. It was quite an extraordinary move, which must be attributed to his powerful connections within the Company. Although barely 28, Orme was now, next to Governor Pigot and Stringer Lawrence, the most important man on the Madras Council. He had been promoted over the heads of his seniors and elders, such men as Charles Boddam and Henry Powney, the fifth and sixth members respectively, both of whom were past their mid-thirties. Both George Pigot in his late thirties and the venerable Stringer Lawrence were also very much older than him. Indeed with the possible exception of Charles Bourchier, who in comparison was only a lowly thirteenth member of Council, Orme was by far the youngest member of the Council. Within a very short time, he had achieved a position and a degree of influence way beyond the scope of his years.

Although he was not much older than many of them, Orme had become a highly respected figure amongst the junior servants of the Company, who looked up to him as an authority on Indian affairs and Company politics. William Rumbold, the elder brother of Thomas Rumbold, later baronet and Governor of Madras, wrote while on campaign in the Madura district:

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103 Ibid. p.218.

104 Ibid. pp.217-18.

105 p.218.

106 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book, 1756, p.75.**

> With regard the disposal of the country it would ill become me to offer my opinion, all I can presume to do is to state affairs as they stand here.....your judgement sir, more enlightened from a better and clearer insight to affairs will determine for the best and it shall ever be my pride and study to promote as far as in me lays the success of your determination.[107]

Orme took a fatherly interest in many of these young men and took several of them under his wing. He befriended James Alexander, later 1st Earl of Caledon, who had come out to Madras as a Junior Merchant in 1752. He employed him first as his assistant in his reorganisation of the accounts and later as his agent in his various business ventures. In a similar vein he also befriended the young Writer Alexander Dalrymple, whose studies he encouraged and to whom he gave full run of his considerable library.[108]

In the August of 1756 Orme's good fortune was overshadowed by disastrous news from Bengal. The English settlement at Calcutta had been captured and sacked by the new Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula. Many of the inhabitants, including the Governor and most of his Council had fled the town. The remaining English prisoners were imprisoned in a tiny dungeon, later to become notorious as the Black Hole of Calcutta. The news came as a terrible shock to the English at Madras, many of whom were completely at a loss to understand how such a thing could have happened. To answer these questions and partly to satisfy his own queries, Orme began to conduct his own post-mortem into the events.[109] This was based on the information which he gathered from the refugees themselves as they began to arrive in Madras.[110] Many of these, recognising Orme's expertise and authority on Indian affairs, were only too happy to compile accounts of their experiences for him. David Rannie, for example, a ship's captain who had been at the sack of Calcutta, had no doubt that Orme was one of the few men who had the authority to ensure that something was done about it.

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107 OV. 48, W. Rumbold - Orme, June 18 1757, p.202.

108 H.T. Fry, **Alexander Dalrymple (1737-1808) and the Expansion of British Trade** (1970), pp.4-5.

109 OV. 28, Orme - J. Payne, Nov. 2 1756. p.46.

110 OV. 19, pp.5-64, pp.73-76, 77-92, 125-142, 147-161.

> This is the rough draught of the ruinous consequences that must attend the loss of Calcutta (if not established again quickly), nor will I be more particular because you have a gentleman at Madras (I mean Mr. Orme) who can demonstrate these consequences, both with regard to Europe and India, as well as anybody I know either on that quarter of the world or this.[111]

Orme's own study rejected many of the theories which were current at the time. The real reason for the Nawab's attack he felt, had to lie in the instigation of one of his principal officers or in the Nawab's own eagerness to please his troops by plundering the richest town in Bengal.[112] To this extent he did not subscribe to the popular notion that it was the Bengal Council who had precipitated the attack. However, he remained scathing in his criticism of the Bengal men for their conduct of the defence and their behaviour during the retreat.

> What should have been prohibited, was admitted and what should have been prepared neglected, and when the enemy drew nigh every regulation was attempted but added to the confusion ..... This is visible in the retreat.[113]

In Orme's eyes the only figure who emerged with any credit was his friend, John Zephaniah Holwell. Holwell, the only one of the Bengal Council who had not fled and one of the few survivors of the tragedy, was later accused of making personal capital out of the event. Whatever his detractors said, in Orme's opinion there could be no comparison between his conduct and that of the Company's other servants.[114] Holwell's personal sufferings, Orme insisted, had been greater than anyone else's, while his financial losses had been on a par with those of everybody else. Should a Governor from Bengal be required in the future, he told his patron Payne, they need look no further than Holwell.[115] The fall of Calcutta was an important event in Orme's career. The time and study which he devoted to it was to

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111 S.C. Hill, **Bengal in 1756-7**, vol.3 (1905), p.390.

112 OV. 28, Orme - J. Payne, Nov.2 1756, p.52.

113 Ibid. p.53.

114 Ibid. p.54.

115 Ibid. p.55.

provide the foundation for the second volume of his **History**, whose first book significantly, opened with the fall of the city and the expedition launched for its recovery. Together with Clive, Orme was to play a crucial role in the despatch of this expedition. However this episode does not come within the province of this particular chapter and will be dealt with elsewhere.

The loss of Calcutta also dealt a severe financial blow to Orme. He had had a lot of money invested in Bengal and had a trading partnership going with Holwell.[116] Holwell had traded on behalf of both of them in Bengal, while Orme had represented their interests in Madras. The sack of Calcutta involved the two men in considerable losses, not only of their own money but also of large sums belonging to other people. Captain Philip Jodderel for example, lost the 5,766 Current Rupees he had invested with them and the two partners had to reimburse him largely out of their own pockets.[117] Although the recovery of Calcutta and Clive's triumph in Bengal eventually led to the restitution of many of these losses, at the time they must have weighed heavily on his mind. In this context, Orme's championship of Holwell and his vigorous efforts to promote the recovery of Bengal begins to assume a much more personal dimension. Certainly his wholehearted efforts would not have suffered from the knowledge that he too had everything to gain.

As well as his public duties, Orme like any other Company servant continued to trade privately on his own behalf. His horizons however, were now much wider than before and he invested much further afield. He now had a considerable investment in the China trade and was involved in exporting commodities such as redwood to Canton.[118] This, by all accounts did not go well and there is reason to believe that he made heavy losses. On one occasion, for example, he was swindled out of £1000.[119] Orme's most important undertakings were the official contracts which he obtained. In March 1756 in partnership with two other Councillors - Henry Powney and Alexander Wynch-Orme was awarded the

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116 OV. 222, Orme - Holwell, June 24 1757 p. 11.

117 Ibid. pp. 12-13.

118 Ibid. Orme - Captain W. Hutchinson, June 23 1757, p.5.

119 Ibid. Orme - Peter & Joseph Godfrey, June 23 1757, p 5

contract for the supply of bullocks and drivers to the army.[120] He also managed to acquire the victualling and commissariat contracts.[121] This done, he had high hopes of emulating the great success of Clive, who had managed to amass almost £40,000 from his handling of the very same contracts. The expedition of 1757, under Captain John Caillaud, which was launched against the rebellious Poligars of the Madura and Tinnevelli districts, was one which was totally supplied by Orme. He undertook to provide the transport, the foodstuffs, the equipment and the wages.[122] Orme himself remained in Madras and was content to leave the operations on the march to his young agent, James Alexander.[123] From the very beginning, the supply operations were beset with difficulties. The supply of bullocks became a major problem and Orme's agents found enormous difficulties in procuring bullocks of the right quality.[124] There were also labour problems;[125] the lascars and coolies insisted on extra batta, as did the bullock cart drivers, all of them moreover proved extremely unreliable There were also long delays in the victualling; the arrack supply, for instance, was frequently interrupted. The whole venture was to prove rather ill fated. The contract was not a great success and Orme conspicuously failed to emulate the profits of his predecessor.[126]

In November 1756 news had reached India of the outbreak of the Seven Years War. The coming year, as it turned out, was to prove an alarming one for the inhabitants of Madras. Everywhere they looked things seemed to be going against them. The Nawab's territories were even more troublesome than ever and there were several rebellions against his rule. At the very beginning of the year trouble had flared up once again in the Madura and Tinnevelli districts and as we have already said, Caillaud was dispatched to deal with it. While Caillaud was there, the Nawab's brother, the governor of Nellore rebelled against him. Caillaud was forced to

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120 **Madras Calendar**, p.50.

121 OV. 48, J. Carnac - Orme, 1757 p.242.

122 OV. 52, J. Caillaud - Orme, Received Jan. 14 1757, pp.49-54.

123 OV. 48, J. Alexander - Orme, April 25 1757 p.70.

124 Ibid. C. Milton - Orme, May 26 1757, p.214.

125 Ibid. J. Davidson - Orme, May 27 1757 p.214.

126 OV. 48, J. Alexander - Orme, July 22 1757, p.151.

dispatch part of his forces northward to Nellore under Colonel Forde. Forde, however, failed completely in his attempts to storm the town; meanwhile the French, seeing their opportunity, launched a raid to seize Trichinopoli. The city was saved only by a lightning forced-march by Caillaud, who returned posthaste from Madura. The situation, however, did not improve. Caillaud, returning to Madura, was repulsed a second time while the English lost control of the Nellore districts, sustaining a severe political and financial blow in the process. In the north, the French under Bussy had been building up their forces in the Deccan. By the end of June they had succeeded in driving the English from their factories at Injarám and Madapollam. By mid-summer they had also seized Vizagapatam, which was the main focus of the Company's cloth trade in the Northern provinces. The arrival of a French fleet in September with 1,000 men of the Regiment de Lorraine confirmed the rumours which had been rife for most of the year, and seemed to set a seal on things.

Orme, like many of his fellows, was convinced that the East India Company stood on the brink of total ruin. Unless the government intervened soon, all would be lost.[127] Yet despite the pressing need, his attitudes were very much those of a Company servant and he remained firmly resistant to the idea of government control. If Crown troops were to be sent out, he emphasized to his friends at home that they would be useless unless placed under the authority of the Company. What he wanted was government assistance but without government authority. To this extent he was quite insistent that no officer above the rank of Captain should be sent out: "It is men we want and not officers."[128] Quoting the example of Colonel Adlercron and the Crown troops under his command at Madras, Orme pointed out that the end product of such conflicting authority invariably tended to cause great inconvenience and obstruction to the Company's policies.[129] In a similar vein, Orme was at great pains to point out that only the East India Company could preserve the trade of the Indies for Britain. Even if the King was to appoint his own representatives to govern India and even if they were to throw open all the

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127 OV. 17, Orme - Holdernesse, July 30 1757 p.340.

128 Ibid. p.341.

129 Ibid.

Indian ports, English trade with India, he argued, would hardly be as much as it was now.[130]

By the end of 1757 Orme's hopes of succeeding to the Governorship were at their peak. His friends John Payne and Peter Godfrey were now entrenched in positions of great power. Peter Godfrey,[131] whom he had known since 1754 and who had acted as his agent and banker in London, had returned to influence as Deputy Chairman. John Payne in the meantime, had graduated at the start of 1757 to the supreme position of Chairman of the Directors. Most important of all, Clive's rivalry no longer presented a threat. He had decamped to Bengal and showed little sign of returning. As Orme saw it, the road was almost clear.

> Only Powney now stands between me and the Chair. If the Company should do me the honour to give me Clive's station. Let it be left to my choice to stay in Madras, where I will take care of the warehouse notwithstanding my title.[132]

Orme also had his own ideas on the best way to deal with Bussy and the French threat in the Deccan. He was convinced that the only way to recover the lost territories in the North was to resurrect his old idea of a combined operation between Madras, Bombay and the Marathas against Salabat Jang.[133] The bait which was to be offered the Marathas was that they should have all the forts and territories which were conquered; in exchange all they had to do was to pay the expenses of the English troops, 300 from Bombay, 500 from Madras. The result of this scheme was that Bussy would either be beaten or driven down to Masulipatam. Whatever the issue, the French would no longer have the advantage of the great territories they now commanded, while with the Maratha war continuing, Salabat Jang would no longer be able to provide them with the wherewithal to maintain their troops in the field. Once again, Orme went to great lengths to canvas support for his plans and once again, to his great impatience, he found his arguments falling on deaf ears.

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130 Ibid. p.342.

131 Parker, "Directors of the East India Company", pp.118-20.

132 OV. 28, Orme - J. Payne, Nov. 16 1757, pp.214-15.

133 Ibid. Nov. 17 1757, pp.220-1.

> All this would be talking Greek to your present Governors in India. I was six hours in council and the whole morning in private to get Mr Pigot to sign the letter of the 30th November 1755 sent by ours to the Bombay Committee on the subject of the expedition to Salabat Jang.[134]

Despite this, he was careful not to antagonise his superior. Indeed rather than risk upsetting his chances of the succession, he made every effort to stay in Pigot's good books.[135]

Orme, it is clear, was becoming increasingly conscious of just how much he stood to lose. As a prominent member of the Council he lived in some style in Madras' most salubrious residential area, The Mount, and maintained an establishment of 14 servants.[136] An order placed at Pondicherry for books and cloth stuffs to be sent on from Paris, shows us just how fastidious and expensive his tastes had become:

> As much silk of cinnamon colour as is necessary to make a coat, waistcoat, and three pairs of breeches. Enough taffeta of the same colour as is necessary to line a coat and a waistcoat. Two pairs of laced ruffles, costing Francs 250 - 300 livres a pair.[137]

The serious minded young student of his early days had metamorphosed into something of a dandy with a definite taste for fine and fashionable clothing. In common with many of his contemporaries at Madras, Orme had also become something of a womaniser. His old friend John Dalton reminiscing some years later, recalled with envy Orme's prowess with women during their Madras days.[138] Indeed there was hardly any sign of the strong religious convictions which characterised his early years in Bengal. However his love of books had not left him, in fact he had merely became more of an aesthete and a connoisseur, with a taste for beautifully bound books to match his taste in clothes. Hence the books he now

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134 Ibid. p.221.

135 Ibid. July 30 1757, p.206.

136 OV. 222, 1758, p.50.

137 Ibid. 1757, p.16.

138 OV. 15, J. Dalton - Orme, Feb. 1 1764, pp.360-1.

tended to order were those in the finest and most beautiful editions.[139] Despite the guile and cunning which so often got the better of him, at heart Orme was not an unkind man. On one occasion, for example, when acting as executor for the estate of a deceased client he declined to extract his customary commission. The grounds he gave were that the client's younger daughter, Mary Cope, was likely to need the money much more than he himself did.[140]

In April 1758, a new French fleet reached the Coromandel coast. It carried the new French commander in India, the Count de Lally, and with him a further reinforcement of 1,000 Royal troops. The arrival of this force heralded a grave deterioration in the British position in South India and within weeks, Lally had laid siege to Fort St. David. It capitulated in the first week of June and to the English at Madras a siege seemed almost inevitable. The same period also saw a grave decline in Orme's own fortunes, although for very different reasons. News of his practice of criticising his seniors through his reports to the Directors had begun to leak back to Madras. Orme's assiduous efforts to cultivate Pigot proved of no avail and, as he himself had feared, he found he had become a social pariah within the settlement.

> It is some time that I had observed a certain alteration in Mr Pigot's manner of carrying himself to me in Outwards, such as no longer doing me the honour to call at my lodgings. The other day he told Speke that he knew for certain I had written to England of his attachment to Lawrence.[141]

Pigot soon ceased from holding any intercourse with his Councillor at all, Lawrence and the others followed his example and within a short time Orme found himself a complete social outcast.

The leak itself probably had its origin in the indiscretion of Payne, who for some time had made a habit of confiding in Thomas Saunders. Orme himself suspected that this was what may have happened. Saunders had by this time become

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139 OV. 222, 1757, p.16.

140 Ibid. Orme - R. Wood, Nov. 11 1757, p.25.

141 Love, **Vestiges of Old Madras**, vol.2, p.489.

a confirmed enemy of his and Orme had every reason to fear the consequences of his enmity:

> I am informed, not to doubt of it, of an inveterate implacability against me in Governor Saunders. I have some reasons to think that your confidence in that Gentleman may have led you to communicate to him what I have formerly wrote to you. If so, I am no longer at a loss for the channel of Mr Pigot's intelligence. I must request, as a very particular mark of your regard, that you never communicate to Saunders anything I may communicate to you. Had I anything to fear, he is the man on Earth I should dread as an Enemy.[142]

Wherever the blame lay, it was Orme who found he had to pay the price. The mounting social ostracism made his life so unbearable that he found himself forced to contemplate giving up his career and leaving India. He had heard nothing from his friends amongst the Directors so there seemed little point in staying. It seems that by May he had made his decision, for he was already making arrangements to remit his monies back to England through the medium of diamonds.[143] In July he resigned his post as Export Warehouse Keeper.[144] Fortunately for Orme he was now in a much better financial position, having been fully compensated for his losses in Bengal, so that he could now afford to leave. His preparations were nearly complete when in September news arrived from England that at long last he was to be appointed as Pigot's successor. In view of Clive's appointment to Bengal, it was decided that Orme would be given the post of second in Council with the right of succession to Pigot.[145]

Success seemed assured and Orme appeared to be on the verge of fulfilling the ambition for which he had struggled and schemed for the last five years. However, it was at this point that Pigot struck. Immediately after the arrival of the despatch, at a Council meeting on the 25th September he formally indicted Orme on two counts.[146] Firstly he accused Orme of having deserted his post at a time of

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142 Ibid.

143 OV. 222, Orme - N. Garland, May 15 1758, p.36.

144 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book 1758**, p.120

145 **Madras Calendar**. p.159.

146 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book 1758**. p.175

emergency. Secondly he charged him with having tried to extort money from the Nawab of Arcot.

The first of Pigot's charges concerned the preparations which Orme had been making to return home. These could not have come at a worse time. Fort St. David had just fallen to the French, who were now advancing towards Madras. To all and sundry it looked as if Orme had panicked and was making ready to flee his post before the siege began. It was a grave error of judgement and one which Pigot was to capitalise on.

> At this time and under these circumstances, when it more especially became the duty of those to whom the Company have principally entrusted the management of their affairs to inspire the rest by their example with notions of firmness and spirit; at this crisis I say, Gentlemen, Mr Orme thought it not unbecoming his station to dispose of his effects and concerns, to remit his fortune home in Dutch Bills and publicly to avow his fears by taking passage for Europe in the "Grantham".[147]

Pigot's words were carefully chosen. Orme, he emphasised, in trying to abandon his post at such a crucial moment was guilty of a grave dereliction of duty. It was, he implied, conduct which ill became a future Governor, who was expected to set an example by his firmness and sense of responsibility. Orme's actions in contrast had threatened to undermine the morale of the entire community.

The second charge concerned the Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ali, who had complained to Pigot that Orme had tried to extort money from him. First of all, Pigot alleged that he had come to know of several conversations which Orme had had with the Nawab's Vakil.[148] During these conversations Orme had repeatedly emphasised the services he had done the Nawab and hinted that he had not been properly rewarded. Orme was supposed to have implied that he expected either to be highly rewarded or at least given the management of the most lucrative of the Nawab's territories, so that he could claim his own reward. Moreover, Pigot alleged,

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147 p.176.

148 Ibid.

Orme had actually written a letter to the Nawab informing him of the Company's new dispositions.[149] In this Orme had pointed out that he had been appointed Deputy Governor and would soon be the new Governor. In the circumstances, he had implied, it would be in the Nawab's best interests to keep in his good books.

It was said that Orme had gone on to have a personal meeting with the Nawab during his Durbar. First of all, he had taken pains to point out how he had always been the Nawab's especial friend. He emphasised that he had always espoused the Nawab's cause and had managed to save the management of the Nawab's affairs from going into other hands.[150] Even though he had the power and the opportunity, and would have benefited enormously from farming the Nawab's territories out to others, he had refused the temptation. The Nawab apparently had replied only with polite sentiments, merely repeating how highly he esteemed Orme and how grateful he was to him.

> But that kind of Eastern compliment not answering Mr Orme's purpose, he very frankly came to the point himself, and acquainted the Nabob, that he thought he well merited a present of twenty thousand pagodas.[151]

Muhammad Ali procrastinated, explaining that his purse was depleted and procrastinated. Angered by this, Orme was alleged to have threatened the Nawab that if the money was not paid immediately, he would do all he could to ensure that the management of the Nawab's territories was entrusted to somebody else. The Nawab in his turn was said to have been quite astonished that Orme should behave in such a fashion at his own Durbar, within earshot of his own sentries.

> The Nabob, tho' happy in a remarkable calmness and command of temper, could no longer endure a behaviour so insulting ..... And thereupon told Mr Orme, that his visit had been long enough, and he was at liberty to act, in the affairs of his Circar as he thought proper.[152]

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149 Ibid.

150 Ibid. p.177

151ibid.

152 Ibid.

In his reply to the charge of deserting his post, Orme denied that he lacked resolution or steadfastness. His decision to leave, he said, had been motivated chiefly by his disillusionment with the slow progress of his career together with the increasing deterioration of his health.[153] Although in retrospect Orme admitted that he doubted the wisdom of his decision, he still did not feel that he merited the barrage of condemnation which had come his way.

> As soon as his Affairs ..... were contracted, he took the resolution, perhaps a culpable one, and if so, it must be his fortune to submit to the censure he deserves, though he cannot think it merits so harsh an Epithet as the President has characterised it with of being dishonourable.[154]

As for the second charge of extortion, Orme flatly denied that he had ever made any demands of the Nawab. Indeed he professed complete astonishment over the whole affair. He vehemently denied that he had ever written any letter to the Nawab and insisted that it must have been a forgery. He was, however, acutely conscious of the weak and exposed nature of his own position:

> The Nabob will doubtless support his own allegations by the evidence of his own creatures; and such is the misfortune of Mr Orme's defence that he is only able to oppose a single negative, to perhaps, the voice of multitudes.[155]

Given the infamy and degradation accompanying these accusations, he felt that he had no option but finally to abandon any idea he may have had of a career in India. The only choice now left open to him, he said, was to beg for leave to resign from the Company.

The inquiry was adjourned until the 28th September, when the Council reconvened at the Governor's Garden House. This time, the Nawab and his Vakil, Antaji Pantalu were also present. In Orme's presence the Nawab confirmed everything which Pigot had said.[156] The note mentioned in the charge, said the Nawab, had been delivered to him by Orme's Dubhash, Sunku Rama, in the presence

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153 Ibid. p.178.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid. pp.178-9.

156 Ibid. p.181.

of his Vakil and others before Orme's last visit.[157] He also produced the note, which had been written in Persian on Indian paper. Although the fringes had been cut, the words were still clearly visible. When translated, the paper's evidence was still more damning: "Mr Orme is appointed Deputy Governor, and Mr Pigot is called to Europe. The Government in Bengal was given to Mr Clive, and a title to Admiral Watson."[158] Orme however, continued to protest that the note was a forgery and that he had never written anything of the sort. A genuine letter from him to the Nawab, he said, would have begun with a compliment in the traditional Eastern manner, which was never omitted.[159] Pigot and his fellow councillors felt that this was a point which had to be cleared up and wanted to have Sunku Rama examined before the Nawab. The Nawab however, protested that if Sunku Rama was questioned and did deny the accusations it would be a grave insult to his dignity. Therefore it was agreed that instead the Dubhash would be faced with Antaji Pantalu, the Vakil.

On the 29th,[160] the Board of Inquiry met again. Sunku Rama initially denied all knowledge of the note. Upon being challenged and confronted by the Vakil, he backed down the next day and confessed privately to Pigot that he had drafted and delivered the note without Orme's knowledge.[161] His reason for writing the note, he said, was because the Nawab had in the past frequently asked him for any news which he had heard in town.[162] However, he confessed, that this was the first time he had done it, for he had never written him any news before. There was also other evidence. The Vakil confirmed that Orme had sent for him an several occasions and produced as evidence two notes. The first of these was in Orme's handwriting and said: "Antazea Puntoola come to me without delay. I have something of consequence to say to you."[163] The other had been written by

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157 Ibid. p.182.

158 Ibid. pp.182-3.

159 Ibid. p.182.

160 Ibid. p.186.

161 Ibid.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid. p.182.

Orme's writer, Thomas Pelling, and said: "Mr Orme desires you will come into town immediately, having something to speak with you."[164] On both occasions, said the Vakil, Orme made it clear that he expected some kind of reward from the Nawab.

The findings of the Board were delivered later that day. Concerning the first charge, the Board agreed unanimously that Orme's action in preparing to go home was an ill-timed step, and one ill becoming the station he bore in the Company's service.[165] On the second indictment, the Board accepted Sunku Rama's testimony that Orme had nothing to do with the note which was sent to the Nawab.[166] They all did, however find it quite extraordinary that Sunku Rama should of his own free will go to all the trouble of writing such a note and then getting it translated, when he could just as easily have told the news to the Nawab himself. As for the other parts of the charge, namely Orme's conversations with the Nawab's Vakil and his subsequent meeting with the Nawab, the Board had no hesitation in finding him guilty.

> The Testimony of the Nabob and his Vakeel appearing strong and clear, and no circumstance or reason being even suggested as an inducement to the Nabob to make such a complaint against Mr. Orme undeservedly, the Board have great reason to believe that part of the Charge is just and true.[167]

The success of the French at Fort St. David and the prospect of an attack on Madras may have influenced Orme in realizing his property and remitting it to England. These circumstances alone, however, are surely inadequate to account for his own contemplated departure. Although Orme virtually accepts Pigot's first charge of intended desertion, this is not the whole story. The steady resolve which Orme had displayed in face to face negotiations with unscrupulous tyrants like Murtaza Ali suggests that whatever else he may have been, Orme was not a coward. The real reasons, therefore, must lie in the facts of his social isolation and in the ill health and disillusionment which he advanced as motives in his testimony.

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164 Ibid.

165 Ibid. p.186.

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid.

The charges of extortion do, however, have a much truer ring to them. From what we know of Orme it was quite within his character to have put down his superiors and represented himself to the Nawab as his only friend on the Council. Nor was his behaviour to the Nawab totally out of the ordinary. As Commissioner for the Nawab's account, Orme probably had more to do with him than any other member of the Council. As we can see from his dealings with the Mysoreans, Orme was also well versed in the underhand methods of Indian politics. Moreover, he was well known for the low opinion which he held of Muhammad Ali: "In my private character, I pity no man of Earth as sincerely as I do this Nabob. He has cunning but no sense - cunning to make shifts not sense nor courage to form a plan."[168] Orme had not made a great commercial success of his time in India, and it is quite possible that he would have seen the Nawab as his best chance of obtaining a substantial sum of money before he left. Given all the circumstances, it is only too likely that Orme would have tried to intimidate and browbeat the Nawab and just as likely that he thought he could get away with it; indeed, given the standards of the time, neither was "extortion" necessarily a dirty word. Orme presumably, would have seen it in much the same light as Clive, as a "present" from a grateful ruler, a natural part of the Indian political process. Clive in later life was called to account for the huge sums of money which he had received from the Nawab of Bengal. He justified his actions by pointing out that there was all the difference in the world between receiving presents and extorting money.

Whatever the truth of the matter, it is clear that Orme's gravest mistake lay in having alienated Pigot. For it was Pigot who was the prime mover behind most of the charges against him; without his enmity it is highly unlikely that any of these issues would ever have come up. In later life Pigot too was accused of "extortion", of having exacted monies from the same Nawab of Arcot. "Extortion" as such was clearly not the issue, it was merely an excuse. The real issue was that Pigot had found out that one of his senior lieutenants and the man who was going to succeed him had been informing on him. In the circumstances he was determined to do everything in his power to discredit him and bar him from the succession. It was not

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168 OV.28, Orme-Payne, Nov.17 1757, pp.218-19.

just Pigot that Orme had to contend with. His actions had alienated the whole settlement. In normal circumstances the servants of the Company abroad formed a close, very tightknit group. In writing about them in his letters to the Directors, Orme was deemed to have betrayed the entire community. No one as a result was willing to stand by him or speak up for him. Both Clive and Pigot had friends and supporters who rallied around them. Orme, when the time came, had nobody.

It is this complete isolation which best explains why Orme made hardly any attempt to defend himself. There was no trace of the resolve and forcefulness with which he had defended himself against the damning allegations of his sister. Orme, it seems, was completely crushed by the extent of his isolation and the depth of the antagonism against him. Clearly in the circumstances he felt the situation was quite hopeless and that it would be futile to try and carry on. Even if he were to win his case the general feeling against him at Madras would have made it quite impossible for him to stay on.

News was also beginning to reach him that his influence back in England was also on the decline. His supporters amongst the Directors had fallen out with each other over the issue of Holwell's candidature for the Bengal government.[169] Payne as Chairman, supported by Drake, led the faction favouring Holwell. Peter Godfrey on the other hand had allied himself with the party led by Laurence Sulivan. Matters came to a head with the Company elections in April 1758, which were the first ones ever to be contested. Payne made little attempt to canvass support and was heavily defeated.[170] Payne, who had become increasingly disillusioned with Company politics, sold off most of his stock soon after the elections and retired from Company affairs. Thus the despatch of 8th March which proclaimed Orme's promotion was in fact their last effort. Although Peter Godfrey became the new Chairman in 1759, for Orme it was already too late. By October 1758 he had already left Madras aboard the "Grantham", all his hopes of a career in India in ruins.[171]

Orme had risen very far, very fast. After barely five years he found himself all set to become the next Governor of Madras. Had he been content to

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169 Parker," Directors of the East India Company." p. 200.

170 Ibid.

171 OV.222, Orme - G. Pigot. Oct.4 1758, p.44.

wait, he would undoubtedly have become Governor. It was a job for which he had shown all the qualifications, an incisive and adept political mind matched by a great capacity for administration and organization. However, his ambition would not allow him to wait. Although his career had progressed at unprecedented speed, Orme remained impatient and frustrated. In his impatience he overreached himself and breached the settlement's unwritten code of loyalty, which was to be his downfall.

It was a tragic case of wasted opportunities. Had he been able to restrain himself and wait, in a few years Orme would have had everything he had wanted; wealth, power and position. As it was he found himself forced to abandon his chosen vocation, for which he had struggled and schemed so hard, in mid-stream. He had to leave India without having had the chance to secure either the fortune or the position which an Indian career bestowed on many of his contemporaries. A career which had begun so promisingly and with such high hopes in 1754, had ended barely five years later in ignominy and failure.

Chapter III

The Search for a Vocation. (1760-1769)

On the 4th January 1759, as the "Grantham" was rounding the Cape of Good Hope, she was approached by two French ships of the line. In an attempt to deceive the enemy the "Grantham's" master, Captain Oliver, hoisted Dutch colours and headed for Table Bay. The French caught on at the last moment, and as the "Grantham" was about to enter the Bay they bore down and seized her. The ship, along with all its passengers, was taken to the island of Mauritius, France's most important base in the Indian ocean.

Orme was detained in Mauritius for almost all of 1759. Towards the end of the year he was released and allowed to return to the Cape of Good Hope. Having rested for a few weeks in order to recover his health, he made plans for his return to Europe, intending first to spend a short time in France before returning to England. Despite the continuing hostilities between England and France, Orme still went ahead with his plans and embarked for France aboard a French ship. His action was not well received by his compatriots and attracted a lot of criticism in East India Company circles.[1]

Orme landed at Nantes in the spring of 1760. He spent almost six months in France, during which time he travelled widely and immersed himself in French culture. His command of the language broadened the width of his intellectual and social experience. Thus he was able to appreciate at first hand the Enlightenment authors for whom he had developed a taste in his youth. During his stay, Orme attended two plays, both comedies - Montenoy's **Les Philosophes** and Voltaire's **L' Écossaise.**[2] The first was a vicious satire on many of the leading figures of the Enlightenment, whom Montenoy lampooned as materialists advocating destructive principles, devoid of any morality or religion. The play provoked a furious response from authors all over France and generated a controversy which Orme followed with great relish and attention. Although he had reservations about many of Montenoy's arguments, Orme had no such doubts

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1 **Love, Vestiges of Old Madras,** vol.2, p.519.

2 **Fragments,** pp.xxiv-xxviii.

about Voltaire, for whom he had the greatest admiration; "No writer for the theatre has rendered virtue more amiable, and the subjection to our passions more dreadful." Hence he was full of praise for **L'Écossaise,** a political satire against the champions of the church, which seemed for him a perfect example of Voltaire's dramatic technique and comic timing.

In October 1760 Orme arrived in London, having sailed from Rotterdam, where he had left the bulk of his possessions, his books and his clothing.[3] These had failed to clear through customs and it was about six months before Orme managed to retrieve the bulk of them. He stayed first with his aunt, Mrs. Adams, at Cavendish Square, moving from there to lodgings in Hanover Street and then Norfolk Street. Still only in his early thirties, he found himself having to contemplate an entirely new life. The options did not appear promising. His career in India was over for good and he had been forced to return home prematurely, his reputation in tatters. He had not had the chance to amass a great deal of money, being expelled before he had reached the really lucrative positions. His account with his bankers, the Godfrey brothers, suggests that he was left with an estate of only £5,957 after all expenses had been taken care of.[4] Compared with the enormous amounts which his friends, such as Clive, Richard Smith and James Alexander,[5] were to bring back from Bengal this was a trifling sum. Orme was clearly never going to be able to live the life of a great nabob, with a country estate, a town mansion and the prospect of a career in politics. Still £5,000 in eighteenth century England was a comfortable enough sum for a bachelor. Orme, if he had wanted to, could have afforded to purchase a small estate of 100 acres or so and have lived the life of a small squire. Randolph Marriot, for example, another returned Company servant, was able to purchase a house and 135 acres in Yorkshire for £5,000 in 1770.[6] Retirement in the countryside, however, was not for Orme, for his aims and ambitions dictated that he remain in London. Orme eventually installed himself at number 11, Harley Street, where he was to spend the next thirty years of his life. Harley Street was part of a newly created suburb which had only recently been carved out of Marybone

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3 OV.222, Orme - G. Ellinkhuysen, March 23 1761, p.76.

4 OV.293, Jan.31 1759 pp.140-1.

5 P.J. Marshall, **East India Fortunes** (Oxford, 1976), pp.235-6.

6 Ibid. p.216.

Fields.[7] Situated on the very northwest fringes of London, on the very wide stretch of fields and pastures, Harley Street was then probably one of the most salubrious areas in London.[8] The streets were wide and symmetrically laid out, and the houses in the neighbourhood although not mansions, were tastefully designed and opulent. All in all, it seemed the ideal setting for Orme to pursue his ambitions in, not too grand or expensive but still very tasteful and eminently genteel.

Even though his career out in India had ended in ruins, Orme was still a relatively young man and he remained full of ambition. As he saw it, there were two spheres which were open to him and he hoped to make his mark in both of them. One of the roles which he envisaged for himself, was as an important figure in Company politics back in England. As he had done in 1753, Orme hoped to capitalise on his knowledge of India to carve out a career for himself at East India House. The other role in which Orme saw himself was as a scholar and man of letters. He now found that he had time to return to his **History,** which had been more or less put aside during his Madras days. This, too, offered him a chance to make his name and Orme saw it as his road to fame and fortune. Despite the time and trouble which Orme was to devote to East India affairs, there is no indication that he regarded the **History** as a second best to politics. If anything, it offered him the chance to boost his prestige and standing within East India Company circles, and this, most likely, is how Orme himself would have seen it. Neither, in fact, was to take precedence over the other and Orme found himself busily pursuing both these goals at the same time.

Sadly for Orme, the situation at East India House had changed out of all recognition since his last stay in England. Whereas a decade before, Orme had been very much in demand, now the future seemed to hold only the most limited possibilities for him. In 1753 the higher echelons of the Company were still composed of City merchants and financiers, with little or no experience of India. The great conquests in Bengal and the victories in the South, however, had changed all that. The expansion of the Company's responsibilities in India demanded Directors who were experienced in the Company's administration at home and abroad. Thus the period from 1754 to the end

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7 R.N. Hyde, **The A to Z of Georgian London** (1982), pp.1-2.

8 D. Lysons, **The Environs of London**, vol.3 (1795), pp.256-8.

of the decade had seen an increasing number of men with Indian experience entering the ranks of the Directors. By the late 1750s there was an average of at least four East Indians in the Directorate.[9] Hence there was no longer any call for an Indian advisor as there had been in the Holdernesse days. England was now full of returned Company servants, especially from Bengal, and a freelance expert on Indian affairs was no longer especially interesting or useful.

Moreover, Orme lacked the independent wealth which was needed to command any real influence in this new environment. England was now teeming with rich and influential Bengal servants whose enormous fortunes gave them a quite unprecedented degree of power. In the struggle which broke out within the Company, what mattered was the influence and voting power which these great riches could generate. One had to be able to organise and deliver big blocks of votes within the Company. Orme, with his tiny fortune, could not hope to compete and in comparison had very little to offer.

The first few years after Orme's return home, were to prove a very active period for him. The financial constraints he found himself under forced Orme to curb the expensive tastes which he had developed out in Madras. He found living in London expensive and he had to reconcile himself to living simply and modestly.

> Let you and I, my friend be contented that we want nothing necessary to the ease of our existence and let affluence rattle its Iron wheels without raising in us the Emotion of Envy or the carking desire of mounting its Car.[10]

Nevertheless he did not allow this to curb his ambitions and he pursued both his self appointed goals with equal vigour. Thus he resurrected the **History** and set to work on it again: re-arranging and checking his materials and polishing up the drafts which he had already written. He also found time to add to his dissertations on India. In 1761 he wrote another essay on the subject, this time on the character, physique and diet of the natives, which he called "The Effeminacy of the Inhabitants of Indostan."[11] This,

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9 J. Parker, "The Directors of the East India Company" (Edinburgh Ph.D Thesis, 1977.), p.367.

10 OV.222, Orme - J. Tobin, Aug.11 1761, p.93.

11 India I, 1761, pp.121-37.

however, Orme made no effort to develop and for the time being he was content to leave it in manuscript form. The **History,** though, was a different matter, for Orme saw it as the road to a career and he was determined to publish it. He found a publisher for it in an old friend of Benjamin Robins, John Nourse, who was a well known bookseller and publisher in the Strand. Nourse[12] was primarily a man of science, he dealt mostly in scientific and mathematical works and French literature. Nevertheless he took a keen interest in Orme's work and undertook to publish it. Orme's progress however left a great deal to be desired. He was troubled by recurring ill health; during the summer of 1761, for example, he was scarcely able to pass three days without being indisposed on at least one of them.[13] In addition he was also involved in a number of other projects to do with Company politics. Thus by the end of 1762, Orme found himself coming under increasing pressure from both the printers and expectant friends to hurry up and finish: "I am daily pressed by the devils of printers and the solicitations of friends to make haste."[14]

By the summer of 1763 Orme was finally ready and in August the first volume of his magnum opus was published, entitled **The History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan.** As its title suggests it was primarily a work of military history. Like its earlier drafts, the **History** focused on the battle for supremacy which had been waged in the Carnatic from 1750 - 1754 between the English and the French, together with their various native allies. In five books Orme told the story of the rise of Chanda Sahib and the growing ambitions of the French in India, and how they were scotched by the brilliant successes of Clive and Lawrence.

The French, led by Dupleix, having installed their candidate as Nizam of the Deccan, had tried to impose his ally Chanda Sahib as the Nawab of the Carnatic. Seeing the threat that this would present to their interest, the British for their part, took the side of Muhammad Ali, the son of the former ruler. Together, the combined armies of the French and Chanda Sahib had invaded the Carnatic, whilst Muhammad Ali took refuge in his fortress of Trichinopoli. The struggle which then ensued was to focus on

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12 Eds. E.R. Plomer, G.H. Bushell, E.R. McDix, **A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers in England, Scotland and Ireland. 1726-1775** (Oxford, 1932), p.183.

13 OV.222, Orme - J. Tobin, Aug.11 1761, p.91.

14 India II, Orme - J. Dalton, Dec.22 1762, p.449.

Trichinopoli, which both sides regarded as the key to South India. Its siege by the French commenced in 1751 under Jacques Law. In order to ease the pressure the young Robert Clive was sent to Arcot, the capital of the province, to effect a diversion. Clive captured it and endured the now famous siege of Arcot, which lasted for 50 days and represented the first major success enjoyed by British arms in India. His success at Arcot, combined with subsequent successes at Conjeveram and Kaveripak relieved the pressure on Trichinopoli and severely damaged French prestige into the bargain. It had the effect of bringing the neighbouring kingdoms of Mysore and Tanjore onto the side of Muhammad Ali and the British. In 1752 a relief force under Stringer Lawrence, the British commander in chief, broke through to Trichinopoli. With the assistance of Clive and their new Indian allies, Stringer Lawrence forced the French to capitulate, while Chanda Sahib was handed over and beheaded. Dupleix however had not abandoned hope. He forged a new alliance with the Marathas and the now disaffected Mysoreans, and made a fresh attempt to seize Trichinopoli in 1753. Pressure from home however forced him to come to terms and peace negotiations signalled an end to hostilities, which were finally concluded when Dupleix was replaced by Godeheu the following year.

It was a stirring tale, crowned with brilliant successes, and was particularly suited to the mood of the times. The Treaty of Paris had just been signed, marking the end of the Seven Years War, from which Britain had emerged overwhelmingly triumphant. India was but one in a long line of successes. Britain had established an overwhelming supremacy over the French at sea, she had destroyed the French empire in Canada and on the continent she had established a stable line of defence against the French armies east of the lower Rhine. In the Caribbean, the British had seized French Martinique, Grenada and the neutral islands, as well as Spain's leading island base at Havana, while in the Western Pacific she had launched a successful expedition against the Philippines and had seized Manila from the Spanish. However, as far as Orme was concerned, India was a glorious and unique field of British military achievement: "there is no part of the world in which British arms have of late years, acquired more honour."[15] It was Orme's aim to highlight this tale of military endeavour and

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15 **History** (1763), vol.1, pp.34.

achievement and to bring the deeds of his compatriots to the attention of the English reading public.[16]

The critical reaction was very favourable and Orme was applauded on all sides for his style and his accuracy.[17] The subject matter too, was greeted with great interest; Orme was commended for satisfying general curiosity and bringing to light a period about which so little had been known before.[18] It was felt that his work would appeal as much to the general public as to the scholar, and Orme was hailed as a historian in the true tradition of Polybius and Thucydides.[19] Yet all this provided Orme with very little consolation. Despite all the critical plaudits it received, the **History** did not make anywhere near the commercial impact which Orme had hoped for. Sales of the book were slow and in fact rather poor. By April 1765, for example, only 780 copies had been sold.[20] By February 1766, almost two and a half years after publication, the total had only risen to 900.[21] Given the great expectations which he had had, this could not have failed to have had its effect on Orme. Indeed he was to become increasingly depressed and doubtful over the value of continuing with his work at all:

> It may be a presumption in me to continue since not more than 900 of my books have been sold so that if there is any person who, for my sake, may wish my work damned they will have the consolation to know that it is in a state of purgatory without much chance of ever arriving at the higher regions of fame.[22]

Clearly, he felt that he had not received the recognition which he deserved. This was especially the case with the East Indian community. Despite the enthusiastic praise of his close friends, Orme was deeply hurt that he had not heard more praise from luminaries such as Clive and Stringer Lawrence, whose efforts he had done so much to commemorate.

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16 Ibid. Dedication.

17 Annual Register, vol.7, 1764, p.256.

18 **The Critical Review**, vol.16, 1763, p.249.

19 **Gentleman's Magazine**, vol.49, 1779, p.252.

20 OV.222, Orme - Clive, April 27 1765, p.118.

21 Ibid. Orme - J. Caillaud, Feb.10 1766, p.126.

22 Ibid.

> There has been an amazing apathy in all those whose merits I have commemorated. I question whether there is a single individual, excepting Dalton, who thinks I have done him justice?[23]

Orme appears to have been at the centre of a considerable intellectual and social circle. His wide range of interests is apparent from his contacts with men of science like Dr. Henry Pemberton, his friend Dr. James Wilson and the publisher John Nourse.[24] All three had been associates or acquaintances of Sir Isaac Newton, particularly Henry Pemberton, who had been a protegé of his and was one of the most eminent physicians and scientific writers of the day.[25] James Wilson,[26] a surgeon and teacher of anatomy at the Hunterian School in Windmill Street, was also a leading scientific authority in his own right. After Pemberton's death Wilson went on to publish two courses of his friend's lectures, in 1771 on chemistry and in 1779 on physiology. Orme enjoyed Wilson's company and met him regularly at John Nourse's house, where he spent a great deal of time.[27] Nourse himself was a very well educated and highly cultured man. He had been educated at Oxford and although he specialised in mathematics, he was well versed in the Classics and also fluent in French and Italian.

It was at Nourse's house in 1762 that Orme met James "Athenian" Stuart,[28] who was then about to publish the first volume of his study of classical architecture, **The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated.** Stuart's work, along with that of his partner Nicholas Revett was to revolutionize English architecture and led to the widespread adoption of the Grecian style in both London and the provinces. Orme's deep interest in aesthetics and the classics proved a strong base for an abiding friendship and four years later, Orme was still a regular visitor at his house.[29] Through Stuart Orme also came to know Thomas Anson, the elder brother of Admiral, Lord Anson. Anson became a good friend and Orme often spent one or two months in the

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23 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1766, p.124.

24 **Fragments**, pp.xxxi - xxxii.

25 DNB, vol.15, pp.725-6.

26 Ibid. p.726.

27 **Fragments**, p.xxxii.

28 DNB, vol.19, pp.86-8.

29 OV.222. Orme - R Smith, Feb.1 1776, p.122.

summer with him at his country seat at Shugborough in Staffordshire.[30] He provided Orme with some very useful materials on Clive's expedition to Bengal in 1757, which he had discovered amongst his brother George's papers.[31] On his death Anson left Orme a legacy of £500, which he used to have a white marble bust made by the sculptor Nollekens in memory of his friend.

Orme's reputation as a keen student of the classics gave him access to many of the leading classical scholars of the day. He became well acquainted with a noted classical scholar James Harris;[32] also well known for his writings on philology and philosophy.[33] He was perhaps best known for his principal work, **Hermes or A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Universal Grammar,** which he had published in 1751. The immensely wealthy Edwin, Lord Sandys,[34] who had acquired a reputation as one of the finest classicists of his time and was in addition, a keen student of English history, was another regular associate.[35] Orme's social circle was in fact a varied one and his world frequently straddled both the realms of politics and literature. He knew Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, politician, wit and renowned letter writer.[36] He also came to develop a familiar acquaintance with Edmund Burke, who lived just around the corner in Queen Anne Street.[37] Burke at this stage was still very much involved in editing the **Annual Register.** Thus he may well have been responsible for the highly favourable reception which Orme's **History** received from it. Certainly he was familiar with Orme's work from an early stage, for in later years he was to refer to it frequently in his speeches and writings on the Tanjore controversy. Orme was also acquainted with Burke's patron Lord Rockingham, whom he met at least on one occasion while he was Prime Minister.[38]

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30 Ibid. Orme - T. Anson, July 20 1767, p.161.

31 OV.4, pp.115-140, 141-3.

32 **Fragments,** p.xxxi.

33 DNB, vol.9, pp.7-8.

34 Gentleman's Magazine, 1800, Part 1, p.59.

35 **Fragments,** p.xxxi.

36 OV.222, Orme - L. Scrafton, Nov.13 1761, p.96.

37 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1766, p.122.

38 Ibid.

It was through Burke that Orme first came to meet Lauchlin Macleane, whom Burke had known since his early days at Trinity College, Dublin. Lauchlin Macleane, doctor, land speculator, political pamphleteer, stock market gambler, and jack of all trades, was one of the great political adventurers of the eighteenth century.[39] After a period in America and the West Indies, followed by a spell in Paris, he had returned to London, where he renewed his acquaintance with the Burkes. Since his return Macleane had been working very closely with the Rockingham party and, as a reward for his services the Burkes (Edmund, his brother Richard and their close friend William) had engineered his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of St. Vincent. Orme, like many men of his time, was dazzled by Macleane, if nothing else a man of enormous personal charm, and became one of his most intimate and loyal friends. Macleane, for his part, came greatly to value Orme for his loyalty and integrity. When he was lost at sea in 1778, Orme was one of the three men whom he named as executors of his will.[40] Orme, in his turn, saw Macleane as a man of action and a man of the world.

One of the problems facing Orme was the great discrepancy between his ambitions and his means. His capital was very small and he was constantly beset by financial worries. In the hope of improving his situation, he thought up a scheme for large scale speculation in East India stock. Macleane, he felt, had all the cunning and the daring which was needed to put his scheme into action, and it was to him that Orme turned with his idea. Hence it was under his guidance that Orme made his great foray into the world of stockmarket speculation in 1766. This episode, however, will be dealt with separately in an appendix to this chapter.

Orme was also very much part of a cosy, tightknit circle of returned Company servants, who gathered together regularly at places like the Crown and Anchor[41] or private homes like the Mackay's in Albermarle Street.[42] With those he could not see so often, like John Dalton, an old Madras hand, he still exchanged news and gossip with through the post:

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39 J. N. M. Maclean, **Reward is Secondary. The Life of A Political Adventurer and on Inquiry into the Mystery of Junius** (1963) p.155.

40 Maclean, **Reward is Secondary**, pp.446-9.

41 OV.222, Orme - Mrs Mackay, Jan.24 1767, p.148.

42 Ibid.

> Pray when have you seen Honest King? I often lament that I can't pop in and chat an hour with you (Orme) and him in Harley Street ..... Wynch's wife is as big as she can tumble, if she produces but one it will just make half a score.[43]

The East India Club at the Crown and Anchor was a gathering which Orme attended fairly regularly during the first half of the decade. Here he mingled with old friends like James Alexander and Josias DuPré and old enemies like Thomas Saunders and George Pigot.[44]

In the main Orme's particular friends were mostly returned Madras servants like himself, men like Joseph Smith, Josias DuPré and James Alexander. Joseph Smith had been an Ensign in the Madras army and had risen through the ranks to Captain during Orme's time there. Josias DuPré had also been on the Madras establishment at about the same time, albeit in a much more junior capacity, and had returned to England in 1763. He stayed in England for almost three years, serving as a Director in Clive's camp in 1765. As Orme had done much earlier, DuPré was able to use this period to advance his own prospects and returned to Madras in 1767 as Second in Council. James Alexander, who had become one of Orme's closest friends had also returned with DuPré in 1763. Together the three men formed a very close knit group and in 1766, DuPré married Alexander's sister. Luke Scrafton, a Bengal servant was the exception to the rule. Orme had probably known him the longest of all, for they had both started as Writers in the Bengal service in the 1740's. Like Orme, Scrafton too was very much in the Clive camp and served with his party as a Director in 1764. He was also a historian of sorts and in 1762 he published a study of British rule in Bengal and Indian society which he entitled **Reflections on the Government of Indostan.** There are, in fact, very strong similarities between this work and the ideas on climate and effeminacy which Orme enunciates in his earlier dissertations on Indian society. Given the close familiarity between the two men it is highly probable that Scrafton was very much influenced by Orme. Orme in fact was full of approval for **The Reflections**, whose

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43 OV.15, J. Dalton - Orme, Feb.1 1764, pp.361-2.

44 IOL. Eur. Mss. G37, Box 37, Orme - R. Clive, Dec.26 1765.

arguments he found were in general "well supported by the facts".[45] Indeed, the publication of the **Reflections** in 1762 may well have been the reason why he chose not to go any further with his own essays.

Orme's final return to England was marked by the development of an increasingly close friendship with Richard Smith, whom he had known from his early days in Madras. Originally a Purser's mate, in 1752 Smith had enlisted as an Ensign in the East India Company's army. He distinguished himself at the siege of Nelore in 1757 and thereafter had risen rapidly through the ranks. In 1758 he was promoted to Captain and made aide de camp to Stringer Lawrence. In 1761, now a Major he returned to England where he resumed his acquaintance with Orme. Unlike many of the Madras servants, Smith did not hold Orme's previous conduct against him and retained the highest regard for his abilities.

> I never joined in the opinion of Madras concerning the Chevalier. I rather thought he acted foolishly rather than in any degree criminal. His Perseverance in the great work he is about will do him Honour and he will leave behind him a Testimony of his abilities as a Historian.[46]

The friendship grew apace and when in 1764 Smith returned to India as a Colonel in the Bengal service, it was in Orme's care that he chose to leave his young son. As we shall see, the closeness of this relationship was to have considerable significance for Orme and was to result in his being drawn further and further into Smith's political ambitions.

Despite considerable opposition from the rest of Smith's family, the boy remained under Orme's supervision for most of the time Smith was in India.[47] Orme in his turn took a keen and concerned interest in the boy's upbringing and progress. As a guardian Orme had some advanced ideas as to how children should be brought up. He was very much against trying to cram a child from an early age. It was, he thought, far more important for him to be allowed to play as much as he liked and so develop a strong constitution, at least until he was ten or eleven, when there would be ample time

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45 OV.222, Orme - L. Scrafton, Nov.13 1761, p.96.

46 IOL. Eur. Mss. F128/54, R. Smith - J. Carnac, Nov.20 1762, f.35.

47 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.19 1764, p.112.

for Latin and other studies.[48] The extent to which Orme involved himself in young Smith's education suggests that he derived a great deal of satisfaction from his social ties, and that, whatever his faults, he had a strong sense of responsibility. This is evident in Orme's relations with his own family. Whatever grievances he may have had in the past against his sister Margaret Lloyd, now Mrs. Hosea, Orme spared no effort to help her and her new husband. He did his utmost to obtain a Writer's position for his nephew William Hosea, who went out to India in 1764. Despite several rebuffs he persisted with his efforts and finally managed to get his way two years later. In the interim, he employed every means at his disposal to help the boy maintain himself out in India. It was an action which his nephew did not forget and for which he was to remain deeply grateful: "May you long live happily in the esteem of all those who have the pleasure of your acquaintance is the sincere wish of one amongst the many that are indebted to your bounty."[49] Despite these sober signs of responsibility, Orme had not completely renounced the womanizing ways of his Madras days. Much to the admiration of his cronies, he was able to keep two mistresses at the same time: "I ..... congratulate you on the strength and vigour of your constitution, which enables you they tell me to fully answer the expectations of two buxom wenches."[50]

However, in spite of this wide circle of acquaintances, relatives and mistresses, Orme remained an intensely lonely man. He had, he felt, only a few close friends worthy of the name, on whom he felt he could genuinely rely.

> I have many acquaintance of conversation, some friends who go perhaps a little beyond the precincts of talk, say, who have confidence in me but I have tried once in my life in England to ask for assistance in my affairs where the demand was not great and where the denial seemed impossible: nevertheless I met it[51]

In part this may have been due to his own difficult personality. Indeed by his own admission Orme recognised that he was not an easy man to get on with: "I have no

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48 Ibid. Feb.1 1766 p.122.

49 OV.43, W. Hosea - Orme, Sept.21 1767, p.84.

50 OV.15, J. Dalton - Orme, July 30 1763, p.351.

51 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, March 28 1766, p.130.

friends, because I cannot be the tool of foolish, vain, wrongheaded or wicked views."[52] The close friends he did have were nearly all "East Indians", men like the Smiths, DuPré and Alexander, with whom he had served out in India. As one by one they began to return to India to take up important and lucrative positions, Orme began to feel more and more isolated and insecure. Richard Smith had returned in 1764; in 1766 Alexander had been sent out to Bengal as the Import Warehouse-keeper and in 1768 DuPré was to return to Madras. In the circumstances, Joseph Smith's impending departure to become a Colonel in the Madras Army was a bitter blow, "to me whose lot it is to have so few affectionately my friends the loss of such a man as Joseph is irreparable."[53]

These feelings of isolation had a lot to do with the doubts and apprehensions which Orme had for his own future. Unlike his friends Orme did not have an important post to return to in India. Neither could he envisage a very influential role for himself in Indian affairs at home. Initially though, it seemed that he would be able to exercise some degree of influence through his close connections with Clive. Clive still had the greatest respect for Orme's literary abilities and for the early part of the decade Orme acted as a spokesman for his interests. In 1761, during the dispute between the Dutch and the English East India Companies, Orme was called on to prepare a paper for Clive on the Dutch Company and its resources in the East.[54] The aim of the paper,[55] which Clive intended to present to Lord Bute in his own name, was to emphasise that the English had very little to fear from the Dutch and that it was the Dutch who had the most to fear. It dwelt in great detail on the great value and resources of the Dutch possessions in the Indies. At the same time it went to great pains to point out how poorly defended and vulnerable these territories actually were.

Later the next year, Orme became involved in Clive's opposition to the Treaty of Paris. The negotiations with the French to end the Seven Years War which had been broken off in 1761, were reopened in March 1762. The Indian settlement came up for consideration in June when Lord Egremont and Robert Wood, his Under-Secretary, consulted the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Company together with

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52 Ibid. Nov.18 1767, p.168.

53 Ibid. March 28 1766, p.130.

54 OV.41, Clive - Orme, 1761, p.15.

55 India I, 1761, pp.142-61.

Laurence Sulivan at an informal meeting. At this meeting the Company made it clear that they would insist on certain stipulations in any coming treaty.[56] First, that the French be excluded completely from Bengal. Second, that the qualifying date for the restoration of the territories taken from the French be fixed no later than the end of 1744, so as to exclude the French from laying claim to the gains which Dupleix had made afterwards at the expense of the native powers in the Carnatic. The third demand made was that Muhammad Ali and Salabat Jang should be formally recognised as rulers in the Carnatic and the Deccan respectively. Although Egremont doubted whether these claims were viable the negotiations were put on an official level and a Secret Committee was appointed to negotiate with the Administration.[57] This Committee was set up on the 21st July and after consulting both Clive and Sulivan it put forward more or less the same terms which had been demanded at the informal meeting. Both Sulivan and John Dorrien, the Deputy Chairman pressed the Committee to propose some concessions to the French with regard to the status of Masulipatam, in order to make the Company's demands elsewhere more palatable. Although this proposal was overruled, both Clive and Sulivan fully approved of the terms.

Clive in fact claimed that these terms were largely based on his suggestions. Both Sir George Forrest and Lucy Sutherland agreed that he wrote a memorandum to Lord Bute in support of them.[58] The memorandum attributed to him was, in fact, written by Orme during a stay at Clive's country seat at Condover in August.[59] It was, however, clearly written at Clive's request and with some help from him. Orme argued that the two greatest dangers to the British conquests in India lay, firstly in the readmission of the French with a military force and secondly, in the possibility of the English themselves disarming as the result of some treaty. The first possibility, Orme felt, would lead to the French once again embroiling English affairs by their familiar tactic of inciting the native powers against the English. If their treaty obligations forced the English to disarm, it was vital Orme felt, that the French should be denied every possible

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56 L.S.Sutherland, "The East India Company and the Peace of Paris," in L. Sutherland, **Politics and Finance in the Eighteenth Century**, Ed. A. Newman (1984) p.168.

57 Ibid. p.170.

58 Ibid. p.171.

59 India II, Aug. 1762, pp.503-10.

chance of interfering with them. As he saw it, the English would not be able both to administer and protect the territories which provided their revenue. Hence as their military strength diminished so would their ability to collect revenue, leading overall to a great decline in their revenues. But if, in the general interests of peace the English had to make some concessions, it was important, he suggested, that these were not made all at once but only by degrees: "Whereby the French will understand that we know the full value of each of the concessions we make and perhaps they may be satisfied before we have exhausted all the concessions we intend to make."[60]

The concessions which Orme suggested very much reflected the line taken by the Company during its recent negotiations with the Government, and Clive's subsequent approval of them. Regarding Bengal, Orme was quite firm in his insistence that the French be prevented from again establishing themselves in any manner in Bengal.[61] As regards the Carnatic, Orme repeated the Company's demand by suggesting that the French be put in possession of Pondicherry with the same territories possessed by them at the beginning of 1744, when war with France was declared.[62] Again, his proposal to abandon British control of Masulipatam and make further concessions in the area in order to compensate the French for their exclusion from Bengal, very much echoed the efforts which had been made by both Sulivan and Dorrien. The other cornerstone of Orme's proposals was that a guaranteed freedom in trade had to be extended to the French, wherever they settled, as a result of the concessions made to them in the treaty. This for him was an absolutely vital issue, for, without an equal freedom of trade, all the other territorial concessions extended to the French would be quite meaningless for them.[63]

Broadly speaking, Orme tended to echo the sentiments of the Select Committee as they were interpreted for him by Clive in the summer of 1762. There are even closer echoes of Clive's own sentiments in Orme's close emphasis on the extraordinary value of Bengal to Britain. In his opening preamble Orme went to great lengths to emphasise that England, through its conquest of Bengal was now in possession

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60 Ibid. p.506.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid. p.507.

of territories yielding an average of £700,000 a year.[64] Surely, he asked, the preservation of this great revenue had to be an object of the greatest importance to any government deliberating on a general peace. In his insistence on the total exclusion of the French from Bengal, it is all too clear that Orme's argument was based on the fact that, as it was Bengal which provided the English with their greatest revenues and greatest commercial profits, it above all could not be jeopardised. Similarly, one of the major foundations of Clive's political programme throughout the 1760s was the great importance and value of Bengal to England.[65] Indeed, he had even started advocating that the Company's activities should be centred on Bengal alone.

The Company however, wanted much more than it was to gain in either the Preliminaries or the actual Treaty of Paris itself. In September 1762, the Government curtly told the Company that its terms were unrealistic and inadmissible. The result was total deadlock and by the end of October there had still been no progress made. On the 20th October, Robert Wood saw the representatives of the Company and told them that they must either come to terms or be left out of the negotiating process altogether. Although Orme had tended to more or less to echo Clive's and the Company's position, the final proviso of his memorandum proved him to be more flexible and far sighted then either of them. However, he maintained his opposition to a French presence in Bengal to the last:

> There are so many inconveniences and detriments which will arise from the re-establishment of the French in Bengal that I am persuaded this dangerous admission will if possible be avoided.[66]

If, however, there was no alternative, as a final concession he was still prepared to envisage the reinstatement of the French in Bengal. However, he insisted that this had to be limited to a trading settlement at Chandernagore with only a minimal military presence. Indeed this was what eventually happened. Faced with the Government's ultimatum, the Company was forced to climb down and completely abandon its former position. On November 3rd the preliminaries of the Treaty were

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64 Ibid. p.504.

65 H. Bowen, "British Politics and the East India Company 1766 - 1773" (Aberystwyth Ph.D Thesis, 1986) vol.2, p.275.

66 India II, pp.509-510.

signed.[67] In accepting them the Company agreed to the restoration of the possessions held by the French before the outbreak of hostilities between the two Companies, not in 1744 but in 1749. Neither did the Company obtain any provision for the recognition of Muhammad Ali and Salabat Jang. It also found itself forced to agree to the re-establishment of a French presence in Bengal, this time, however, it was to be unarmed and for trading purposes only.

Like many of his contemporaries, Clive included, Orme was far from happy with the concessions the Company had had to make over the Preliminary Articles. Early in 1763 he wrote another memorandum, entitled "Reflections on the Preliminary Articles regarding India." He sent this to his old patron Lord Holdernesse.[68] Holdernesse had been dismissed from his office in 1761 but he still remained an important figure with influential contacts. Orme began by attacking the status quo of 1749 as the criteria for restoration, which he ridiculed as an absolute absurdity. However, he amended his criticisms on hearing that the regulating criteria was to be put back to the beginning of the year 1749 in the final settlement. The rest of the paper consisted of an enumeration for Holdernesse of the territories to which the French would be entitled by virtue of the Preliminary Articles. Orme remained concerned by the latitude allowed the French in the Deccan, where he saw nothing to prevent them from entering the Peninsula with whatever military force they saw fit. Supposing they were able to resume their old connection with Salabat Jang, he asked, what then would be the consequences for the English?

In 1763 the great struggle between Clive and Sulivan for control of the Company broke out.[69] Orme aligned himself firmly with the party led by Clive and the Director Thomas Rous. For the first time Asiatic wealth played a significant role in the electoral activities of the Company. Enormous sums of money were devoted to the purpose of creating votes. Clive alone is supposed to have split almost £100,000 of India Stock. Nevertheless the Directors' Elections of 1763 proved to be a triumph for Sulivan and a humiliating defeat for Clive and his allies in the Company. Steps were immediately

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67 Sutherland, **Politics and Finance**, pp.166-7.

68 India II, 1763, pp.446-8.

69 L.S. Sutherland, **The East India Company in Eighteenth Century Politics** (Oxford, 1952), pp.110-37.

taken against Clive and orders were sent out to stop all payments on his Jaghir. The Elections of 1764 however, were a limited success for Clive, and six of his followers and six of Sulivan's were elected to the Court of Directors. Sulivan therefore found it increasingly difficult to carry on with the Chairmanship and withdrew from the Court, along with four of his closest supporters. This allowed the Clive party to take the initiative and in May 1764, the General Court of Proprietors agreed to allow Clive to have his Jaghir for ten more years. Battle was renewed for the Elections of 1765. This time Clive and his supporters won an overwhelming victory, in which Orme rejoiced along with everyone else.[70]

Increasingly, however, Orme began to feel that despite his efforts on behalf of the Clive party, he did not count for a great deal with them. Although he was personally acquainted with many of the leading Directors, Orme found that his role as Clive's literary spokesman had not brought him any real degree of influence or recognition. The importance of the documents he had been called on to draft did not disguise the fact that he was little more than a penman for Clive and his interests. This was made starkly obvious to him in 1764, when he failed to obtain Writer's positions for either his nephew William Hosea or his young protegé Charles Morgan. This was despite the fact that both the Chairman, Thomas Rous, and the Deputy Chairman, Henry Crabbe Boulton, were close followers of Clive. Orme felt the rebuff deeply and was very bitter that out of the 49 places which were allotted to Writers not even one could be found for his nephew.[71] It made him increasingly conscious that what influence he did possess derived almost entirely from his own literary reputation. Of his failure to help Charles Morgan he observed acidly that: "... the Directors read no history but that of General letters from India."[72]

The firm control which Clive's party acquired over the Court of Directors after 1765 did not appear to make a great deal of difference to Orme, for in 1766 he suffered yet another humiliating rebuff. He had gone to see the leaders of Clive's party, George Dudley, the Chairman, and Rous, now Deputy Chairman, on some matter

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70 OV.43, C. Morgan - Orme, Sept.24 1765, p.20.

71 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.19 1764, p.112.

72 Ibid.

concerning Richard Smith. However, he had met with a very uncivil reception from the two of them, both of whom, he felt, had behaved quite badly towards him.[73]

Orme began to feel that maybe there was more point in representing the interests of his immediate friends and increasingly, he began to involve himself with the careers of such close friends as the Smiths and James Alexander. They at least, he felt, would not let him down or humiliate him. So it proved. Richard Smith, for one, showed himself to be loyal. He interceded on behalf of Charles Morgan, the young friend for whom Orme had been unable to procure a Writer's place. Smith spoke to Clive, who had Morgan appointed as his aide de camp.[74] He also ensured that Orme's nephew, William Hosea, who had been sent out to India, had enough to live on until he was made a Writer by enroling him in his own regiment.[75]

Much of Orme's time over the next three or four years was spent on this sort of campaigning, during which he was drawn much closer than before into the world of East India politics. Richard Smith, who had gone out to Bengal as one of Clive's commanders in 1764 had managed to alienate both Clive and his successor as Governor, Harry Verelst. Smith's abilities as a soldier were not in dispute. He was put in charge of the 2nd Brigade at Allahabad, and played a crucial role in suppressing the White Mutiny, where his loyalty to Clive was a key element in enabling Clive to bring the revolt under control. Upon Clive's departure in 1767 he became Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal army and set to work reforming and disciplining the Company's troops. However, as Clive observed, he was not an easy man to deal with and his personal qualities left a great deal to be desired:

> I find no fault with Col. Smith's principles but his vanity, self sufficiency and the insolence of his carriage is so intolerable that he has already disgusted every officer who is acquainted with him and I much apprehend he will make a very disagreeable commanding officer.[76]

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73 Ibid. Jan.24, 1767, p.146.

74 OV. 43, C. Morgan - Orme, Sept.24 1765, pp.17-18.

75 Ibid. p.19.

76 IOL. Eur. Mss. D. 546/5, Clive - J. Walsh, Dec.1 1765, pp.121-2.

Within a short time the relationship with Verelst, which had begun so promisingly, had degenerated into a long running feud. Having bombarded Orme with stories of Clive's antagonism and ill treatment of him, Smith now saw Verelst as trying to continue in the same tradition. He felt that Verelst was trying to usurp his authority as Commander-in-Chief and undermine his control over the army.[77] Despite his constant claims of disinterested poverty, Smith was busily engaged in amassing an enormous fortune, part of which he had acquired from lending to the Nawab of Arcot. In 1767, disregarding the new regulations about the acceptance of presents by Company servants, Smith accepted a present of two lakhs from the Moghul Emperor, Shah Alam. Not surprisingly, the Bengal Council regarded this as a breach of the covenant and suspended the present. Smith, however, was outraged and compared his treatment with the reward of two lakhs which Clive had previously obtained from the Emperor for his friend John Carnac. He wrote furiously to Orme demanding justice. He relied on him, he said, to assure the Directors of his disinterested and diligent service and to emphasise how inadequately he had been rewarded.

Smith had a great respect for William Pitt the elder, whom he esteemed as one of the most knowledgable politicians on India and the one most capable of dealing with its problems. As he hoped for a career in English politics after his return, he had written a letter introducing himself to the great man, whose patronage he hoped to secure.[78] This letter he sent to Orme, to whose discretion he entrusted its delivery. Orme agreed with the ideas outlined in Smith's letter, which he described as excellent, but chose not to send it directly to Pitt, explaining that all his letters were first seen by Nuttal, who was also the Company's solicitor. Instead he forwarded it to the Chancellor, Lord Camden, who also approved of much of it and promised to mention it at the right time.[79]

In trying to further Smith's ambitions Orme worked closely with Luke Scrafton, who though one of the most prominent members of Clive's party was also a close friend of Smith's. Orme, too, greatly valued and trusted Scrafton, often feeling that

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77 OV.37, R. Smith - Orme, 1767, pp.36-9.

78 Ibid. March 15, 1767, pp.72-3.

79 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.11 1767, p.165.

he was the only one of the 24 Directors he could really count on.[80] Eyre Coote and William Sumner, were two other recently returned Bengal servants whom Smith felt were well disposed to him and he also asked Orme to try and work through them. Both men had considerable grounds for being ill disposed towards Clive, and Smith hoped that they would be of some use to him in his struggles with Clive's successor and protegé Verelst.

> You must call upon Sumner to act to his viribus against a man who overset him by similar arts. For whatever maybe the consequences, the machiavelism has been taught and inculcated by the Noble predecessor in the Government.[81]

Coote, who had served under Clive in Bengal, had fallen foul of Clive during the Plassey campaign, and ever since had conceived an unreasoning dislike for him. Moreover Smith had heard that Coote was on good terms with Pitt and he urged Orme to make the most of this friendship as he regarded Coote as a very sincere and honest man.[82] Sumner too had fallen foul of Clive, who during his second term in Bengal had dismissed him from his post on the Council for, amongst other things, accepting a present of two and a half lakhs from the new Nawab, Mir Kasim. Orme, however, quarrelled sharply with Sumner shortly after his return and refused to have anything to do with him except on Smith's behalf.[83]

Orme also went to a great deal of trouble at India House on behalf of his other friends. He had worked assiduously on behalf of Joseph Smith to try and get him his military posting to Madras. He supported DuPré in his efforts in 1768 to gain the Governorship of Madras and was deeply angered when on his return, Clive attempted to undo the appointment and substitute John Call instead.[84] He also worked consistently on behalf of Alexander and had a share in his appointment to the Bengal Select Committee.[85] By 1768 Alexander had been made Collector-General and Accountant, by 1769 he had become Chief of the Patna settlement and was beginning to

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80 Ibid. Nov.18 1767, p.168.

81 OV.37, R. Smith - Orme, Sept.1 1767, p.170.

82 Ibid. p.169.

83 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.11 1767, p.165.

84 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Dec.1 1769, p.23.

85 OV.43, Orme - J. Alexander, Nov.21 1769, p.134.

entertain hopes of high office. Orme also managed to do something for his nephew, William Hosea and finally managed to have him appointed a Writer in the Company's service. Through Richard Smith, who spoke to Alexander's successor at Patna Thomas Rumbold, Orme managed to have him posted to Patna. Hosea, in his turn was delighted with his new posting, which offered a much better chance of making money than Calcutta and wrote enthusiastically of his prospects to his uncle.[86] Although Orme threw himself wholeheartedly into these various projects he cannot have derived that much satisfaction from them. He was in fact merely repeating the same role which he had performed for Clive, for he was little more than an agent acting on behalf of other people. Given Orme's ambitious, highly independent nature and the high hopes he had once cherished, it must have been deeply galling to have been reduced to merely being the agent of Dick and Joseph Smith, good friends though they were.

By the middle of 1768 Richard Smith's rift with Clive had widened considerably; with it so had the distance between Orme and Clive. Richard Smith's and Orme's political interests had by now become one and the same, and Orme was now in charge of a small party representing their combined voting power. Smith no longer felt under any obligation to Clive at all and in the impending Company Elections of 1769 he urged Orme to sound out the opposition party of Sulivan and Vansittart to see if they were willing to make any concessions, in return for Smith's and Orme's neutrality.[87] As the relationship with Clive eroded, Orme struck up new contacts in an effort to try and form an independent counterweight to the two opposing factions.

Probably through his great friend Lauchlin Macleane, Orme had become friendly with the banker, Sir George Colebrooke.[88] Macleane, who was an old business associate of Colebrooke's, had during the summer of 1767 formed an increasingly close personal relationship with him, which culminated in Colebrooke proposing Macleane as the second candidate for his own parliamentary seat at Arundel.[89] Colebrooke, who began his career in the family banking firm, inherited large sums of money after the death of his father and brother, and by the time he started to interest himself in

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86 Ibid, W. Hosea - Orme, March 5 1767, p.66.

87 OV. 37, R. Smith - Orme, Aug.3 1768, p.156.

88 Parker, 'Directors of the East India Company', pp.61-63.

89 Maclean, **Reward is Secondary**, pp.207-9.

Company affairs, he was an enormously wealthy man. In 1767 he had entered the Court of Directors on the side of Rous and the incumbent Directors against Sulivan. Although Colebrooke generally agreed with the Directors' stance in supporting Clive, he had scant respect for Rous and found it increasingly difficult to condone Rous' apparently abject submission to Clive's every command. By the end of the year he was also beginning to feel that Clive's pervasive influence was starting to damage the Company's interests. At the same time Colebrooke was beginning to build an independent party around him within the Directorate.[90] By 1768, he had become Deputy Chairman and had a group of six supporters within the Directory. Orme seized his opportunity. He found a ready listener in Colebrooke and clearly hoped he could work through him.[91] He discussed the matter of Richard Smith's present with him and hoped, through Colebrook's influence to stop the curtailment of Shah Alam's allowance, which had recently been effected by the Bengal Council.[92] Orme's plan was to use the potential offered by Colebrook's group to form an independent party within the Directorate, which would challenge the traditional division of power between Clive and Sulivan. "I wished to establish an independent direction by the weight of Colebrook and Rous and others."[93] The eminence grise behind this party, he had intended, would naturally be himself.

All Orme's efforts however, proved to no avail. Faced with the threat posed by Sulivan in the Elections of 1769, Colebrooke sank his differences with the Clive faction and both parties rallied together to meet the challenge. By the middle of 1769 it was clear that Orme had lost all influence with Colebrooke, for as he remarked gloomily: "Sir George Colebrooke is now firmly unified with Clive and enlightened by Scrafton so that my sense of things no longer has any weight with him."[94] From this it is evident that the decision to break with Clive had also resulted in a rupture with Scrafton, who had chosen to remain in the Clive camp. As a result of this failure, Orme found himself with little option but to cross the divide and join the other camp. Hence

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90 H. Bowen, "British Politics and the East India Company", vol.1, pp.176-8.

91 OV.202, Orme - R. Smith, Oct 29 1768, p.1.

92 Ibid. p.2.

93 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Dec.1 1769, p.23.

94 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, May 7 1769, p.20.

the aftermath of the Elections of April 1769 saw him and his little group more or less aligned with Sulivan and his supporters.[95]

Frustrated and unfulfilled in his political ambitions, Orme's depression must have been deepened by the chaotic state of the Company's administration. Everywhere he looked, Indian affairs seemed to be shrouded in inefficiency and corruption, and completely lacking in any sense of direction or purpose. For quite some time now, Orme had been deeply uneasy about the behaviour of the Company's servants in India. In Bengal, the misuse of the Company's trading privileges by its employees resulted in an open breach between the Governor, Henry Vansittart and his Council, and had led to open war with the new Nawab, Mir Kasim. Although the situation had been redeemed by a decisive victory at Buxar in 1764 over Mir Kasim and his ally, Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh, Orme's misgivings remained. The activities of the Company's servants in Bengal, especially the rapacity and abandon with which they pursued their private trade would, he felt, in a short time lead to a complete exhaustion of the province and its revenues. Already by 1765 he was hoping:

> that the rapidity with which fortune has turned her wheel for some of our nation in Bengal may for ever cease, otherwise there must be an end of all that commerce can give. Conquest will afford abundance for a spirit and want forever after.[96]

Dedicated though he was to commemorating the tale of British military achievement, the idea of conquest itself filled Orme with great foreboding. Trade not conquest he felt, should be the main purpose of the Company's presence in India. Conquest and dominion on the otherhand, threatened to undermine all the benefits of trade and commerce and to ruin them for ever.

During 1766 the general disquiet which, in addition to Orme, politicians and members of the Commons had been voicing for some time finally came to the surface. In November 1766 Parliament passed a motion for a general inquiry into the affairs of the East India Company. As Orme saw it, the Company's affairs had

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95 Ibid.

96 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, April 27 1765, p.119.

degenerated in to a chaotic mass of confusion and conflict.[97] The stockjobbers, who were trying to force up the dividend, were quarrelling violently with the Directors, while in the background the shadow of government intervention loomed threateningly over everything. Whatever the result of the parliamentary inquiry, Orme felt that it would all end with a decrease in the privileges and interests of the Company.[98] By now, however, he was starting to have doubts about the nature of the Bengal revenues, whose fabulous extent had been trumpeted about the country and had provoked such an unseemly scramble: "I wish they may not be reckoning their chickens before they are hatched, for eggs that look fair to the eye sometimes produce nothing but air."[99]

During the course of 1767 the Ministry's and Parliament's focus on the Company's affairs became increasingly acute and in June 1767, the first East India legislation was passed. Stung by the turn of events, the Court of Directors came up with a set of proposals whereby the Company agreed to pay the government £400,000 per annum for the next five years. In return the government agreed to renew the Company's charter for another five years. Despite the general relief in Company circles, Orme himself did not think that anything had been really resolved. He felt that the grant of such a sum of money would lead to an even closer scrutiny of the Company's affairs than ever before,[100] whilst the payment of monies had only begun. Once the contract lapsed he felt that even more money would have to be given to the nation.[101] Thus he warned his friends out in India, that as a result of these new developments, any failure in the Bengal administration, whether military or civil, would incur a much greater degree of public odium than before.[102] For, by paying out such a sum, with the expectation of more to come, the Company had indelibly fixed East Indian affairs in the public eye.[103] In this context Orme was deeply concerned by the effects of the East India scare of May 1769. False reports from Bengal, followed by the news of the failure in the

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97 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Jan.24 1767, p.146.

98 Ibid. Jan.25 1767, p.149.

99 Ibid. Orme - G. Mackay, Jan.25 1767, p.150.

100 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Nov.18 1767, p.162.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

war against Hyder Ali, had resulted in a massive fall in the value of stock. The end result was that a very unfavourable impression had been created in the eyes of the public, with the blame coming to be ever more clearly focused on the Company's servants.[104]

In an effort to correct the abuses which were being reported daily from India and to establish some sort of peace, the Directors decided to send out a superintending commission. This would directly supervise the activities of the Company's servants and was aimed at ensuring that Company policy was implemented according to the Director's guidelines. Orme was very perturbed to see the Directors behaving in this way and acting with such a spirit of supersession towards all their settlements abroad.[105] Frequent alterations, he felt, never did much good and violent ones never did any good at all. The sending out of the Commission, he felt, was a quite extraordinary measure, totally out of step with the regular, administrative procedures.[106] In this Orme was not alone; feelings amongst the proprietors were also running very high against the Commission. At the General Court of Proprietors in July, it was feared that the Directors' decision would be rejected. However, despite everything which Orme and his friends could do, the motion was passed by a very narrow margin.

Nor could Orme have been very reassured by what he saw happening out in India. In this respect, the reports of his friends such as Richard and Joseph Smith, who were actually out in Bengal and Madras, must have played a crucial role in shaping his attitudes. Richard Smith's letters from Bengal, for instance, painted a highly unfavourable picture of maladministration and incompetence, in an atmosphere ruled by prejudice and favouritism. He conveyed in graphic detail the incompetent and negligent organisation which made the expedition to Nepal in 1767 such a complete fiasco.[107] He underlined at great length the misplaced confidence which was being placed in Shuja-ud-Daula,[108] who had had his kingdom restored to him after the battle of Buxar. Despite the trust which had been placed in Shuja-ud-Daula by the Governor and the Council, the Nawab continued increasing the size of his army and kept on intriguing with

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104 OV.202, Orme - J. Smith, Dec.2 1769, p.27.

105 Ibid. Orme - J. DuPré, Dec.26 1769, p.31.

106 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Dec.1 1769, p.23.

107 OV.37, R. Smith - Orme, Dec.4 1767, pp.307-9.

108 Ibid. p.313.

outside forces like the Marathas and the Afghans.[109] It was a situation which Smith felt would eventually lead to disaster. By 1768 there were signs that Orme too was starting to believe him. "I think he (Shuja-ud-Daula) will always be inclined to do us mischief and ought always to be narrowly watched."[110]

Smith also poured scorn on the effect of many of the new rules and regulations which the Company had introduced to counteract the widespread corruption amongst its servants. The only result of such measures as the abolition of the Salt Society and the 12% limitation on interest he emphasised, would be to deprive the East India service of all its attractions.[111] He also went on to great lengths to attack the effectiveness of the current administration out in Bengal. He criticised the Select Committee for its divisive and unproductive nature and openly doubted the working of the revenue collection. For Smith, his own ill treatment at the hands of Verelst and the rest of the Council symbolised the favouritism and abuse of power which were rife in the Bengal community. James Alexander's picture of Bengal affairs, though far less critical, had by the end of his stay also begun to lose a great deal of its optimism. In 1767 he had been talking excitedly of the immense revenues Bengal was going to bring in, describing that year's investment as the greatest ever and forecasting an enormous increase in the value of India stock.[112] By 1768 however, he was reporting in a much more sober tone. Although they expected to send home almost £1,000,000, he feared that it would not be able to come anywhere near meeting the expectations of the nation, due to the great scarcity of money and the complete exhaustion of the country.[113]

The news from Madras was if anything, even worse. In 1767 war had broken out in the Carnatic between the English and Hyder Ali, the new ruler of Mysore and his ally, the Nizam of Hyderabad. Joseph Smith, as Commander of the Company's forces, had been entrusted with fighting the campaign. His reports painted a sorry picture of the bungling of the Madras Council and the utter shambles to which it had reduced the campaign. He blamed the origins of the war on the careless and inept

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109 Ibid.

110 OV.222, Orme - J. Alexander, Oct.24 1768, p.170.

111 Ibid. R. Smith - Orme, Mar.14 1767, pp.79-80.

112 OV.43, J. Alexander - Orme, Oct.5 1767, pp.108-9.

113 Ibid. Nov.23 1768, pp.112-13.

diplomacy of the Council, who despite constant warnings, allowed themselves to be outwitted and isolated, only to find themselves confronted by an alliance between Mysore and Hyderabad, "nor did the Gentlemen of Madras absolutely conceive those two powers would attack the Carnatic until they were in the country with their united armies."[114]

The progress of the war itself offered scant consolation. Despite a prodigious outlay, one and a half times the cost of the siege of Pondicherry, the English had very little to show for their efforts, which were often attended by humiliating reverses. According to Joseph Smith, the blame for this rested fairly and squarely with the Council. In his eyes, the entire campaign was undermined by the Council's failure to keep the English armies properly supplied, as well as being hampered by its constant interference.[115] By the end of the war Smith had become quite disgusted with serving in the Madras Presidency and had acquired the lowest possible opinion of the Council: "They mind no interests but their own and you may rot ere one of them would lay down a Rupee to save you."[116] He also painted a graphic picture of the abuse and exploitation of the natives. In particular, he emphasised the ill treatment which was meted out to the Nawab of Arcot by the members of the Council:

> The Nabob is used amongst them worse than a horse keeper and because that man has taken their money at 20 per cent and is not now able to discharge twenty lakhs of pagodas in a day, they load the poor man with the grossest of epithets, everyone abuses him. They live in his country houses while the man lays in a place not larger than a dog kennel and yet he is a bad man ..... was there ever such insolence? And yet we wonder why these black people don't like us.[117]

The failure to achieve any significant result against Hyder Ali perplexed the English. DuPré writing from Madras in 1768 was completely at a loss to explain why an army as powerful as the Company had ever put into the field had met with so little success.[118] He could not see how they were going to extricate themselves from the war

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114 OV.10, J. Smith - Orme, Nov.5 1767, p.12.

115 Ibid. Aug.8 1768, pp.57-8.

116 OV.33, J Smith - Orme, March 28 1768, p.56.

117 OV.10, J. Smith - Orme, Nov.5 1767, p.26.

118 OV.30, J. DuPré - Orme, Oct.25 1768, p.107.

and feared that it would all end in disgrace for the English.[119] His words were to prove prophetic. Early in 1769 Hyder Ali lured Smith southward to Cuddalore and then causing the bulk of his own army to retire, he himself with 6,000 cavalry marched on a panic stricken Madras. Forced marches enabled him to reach The Mount, where he was able virtually to dictate the peace terms.

The terms of the peace provided for an offensive and defensive alliance between Hyder Ali and the Company and for the mutual restitution of all conquests. Although a perfectly equitable settlement, amongst the English in India it was felt to be a very necessary but at the same time deeply ignominious step. They had become accustomed to being victorious wherever they went in India and it forced an entirely new perspective on them:

> The reason it seems so disgraceful to us is that it was begun with ideas of conquest on our part and it is said this is the first time a country Enemy has gained an advantage over us.[120]

DuPré, for example, felt the humiliation of having to conclude such a peace keenly and bitterly regretted having arrived in India just in time to share such a disgrace.[121] Joseph Smith too was mortified by the peace terms, which he was convinced, represented a complete capitulation to Hyder Ali; "in short whatever he asked for he had without hesitation."[122] Moreover, he felt that there had been no real need for the treaty and that the Madras men had been panicked into it by their own fears.[123] For when Hyder Ali appeared before The Mount he argued, his men and horses were all quite exhausted. Hyder himself, Smith insisted, was also in a very exposed position,[124] for there were English troops under Colonel Lang and himself closing on him from behind, while Madras itself was defended by a very substantial force. Yet despite his contempt for his fellow Councillors, Smith spoke with great respect of his antagonist Hyder Ali. Most of all he was impressed by the discipline which Hyder had been able to instil into his troops,

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119 Ibid.

120 Ibid. June 10 1769, p.125.

121 Ibid. p.127.

122 OV.10, J. Smith - Orme, June 26 1769, pp.163-4.

123 Ibid. p.164.

124 Ibid.

who confronted their European opponents with much greater steadiness than any native forces had done before.

Orme too approved of the peace. It was, he felt, a good peace and one which was absolutely necessary, for two more years of war would have ruined the Company for good.[125] Yet, like his friends in India, he was deeply disappointed by this unheard of reverse at the hands of a native power and felt very strongly the blemish of "making peace with a black fellow".[126] If, as Joseph Smith and others said, the English had had it in their power to force a decisive encounter, he felt very strongly that they ought to have fought one last battle with Hyder Ali.[127]

It was all a far cry from what he had been used to. Orme had lived through the years of Arcot, Plassey and Wandewash, a heroic age of resounding victories. The scene which he now surveyed in Bengal and Madras was a much more mundane and infinitely more muddied era of consolidation. It was a world of internecine bickering and maladministration, where the glorious laurels of yesteryear were clouded by disastrous fiascos, like the Nepal expedition or the war with Mysore. Orme had really only admired the people who beat the French on the Coromandel Coast, whom he had idealised in the first volume of his **History.** Now it seemed that their successors could not even beat Hyder Ali, a native prince. For Orme it was a period of great and disturbing changes. He was deeply disturbed by the great expansion of the Company's role in India and the new territorial responsibilities which went with it. Much of Richard Smith's discontent stemmed from an increasing awareness of this enlarged power and responsibility, which he felt was way beyond the scope of the old commercial administration:

> I cannot conceive a Company of merchants qualified to conduct this important machine. It may, it will go on, until some sinister event shall on a sudden shake of the whole system ...[128]

The continued subordination of the military to the civil administration was, in his eyes, one example of just how inadequate and outdated the old commercial framework had become.

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125 OV.202, Orme - J. DuPré, Dec.1 1769, p.25.

126 Ibid. Orme - Alexander, Dec.1 1769, p.24.

127 Ibid. Orme - J. DuPré, Dec.26 1769, p.31.

128 OV.37, R. Smith - Orme, Oct.2 1767, p.275.

> It is absurd in the last degree to place a man at the head of such a weighty and important charge where so much depends on a military system and who is ignorant of all military affairs.[129]

Although after his return to England, Orme had identified himself politically with the group of returned Bengal servants led by Clive, he himself had had no experience of Bengal in the post Plassey period. Hence he had not been privy to the enormous upheaval in Bengal and the revolutionary implications it posed for the future of Company rule in India. As such, Orme remained firmly grounded in the old mercantile outlook. He still clung to the idea that the Company should be a purely commercial organisation and that British interests in India should remain restricted to trade and commerce. Thereafter he could have had little sympathy with many of Smith's attitudes. To Orme, who had been brought up on the civic ideals of Republican Rome, Smith's call for the promotion of the military power over the civil in particular, must have been an anathema. The exalting of the military power had represented the first stage in the decline and destruction of the Republic; Orme, like many others, feared that Britain's political virtue might go the same way. Hence he rejected his friends' arguments on the need for a change out of hand:

> It was decided last year for Madras that the soldier is always to be under the command of the Governor, I myself would not govern anywhere where it was not so. [130]

Faced with this sea of change, Orme took refuge in the ideals of civic virtue and public service which he had imbibed in his youth. More and more, it seemed to him that these values were being eroded by the recurrent disease of party politics and self-interest. So he resorted to lecturing his friends in an elderly and increasingly stentorian manner. To Alexander he voiced a stern warning to avoid the favouritism of party politics, hoping that if he was going to succeed it would only be through his own merits: "I hope to see this without seeing you indebted for your success to any other means than your own merit."[131] As Bolingbroke had written, self interest and greed

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129 Ibid. pp.275-6.

130 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.11 1767, p.164.

131 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Oct. 24 1768, p.171.

were the inevitable result of such party politics. For Orme, the only remedy for the avarice and the excess which prevailed amongst the Company's servants was to return to the disinterested, public service which had been the backbone of the Roman Republic. Hence he warned Joseph Smith to avoid all presents and financial inducements, which emphasised Orme, were the bane of every reputation in India.

> Be assured that every, disinterested man who acts as you do upon the noble principles of public good alone will meet with better rewards than a fortune got by means, which the owner is ashamed to avow.[132]

The disquiet and unease over what was happening in India filtered through into Orme's approach to the **History.** In the eyes of his friends and contemporaries Orme was a patriotic historian, writing for the honour and glory of his country.[133] As such his subject matter was all important to him, for it was imperative that he have glorious and honourable deeds to chronicle. By the middle of the decade Orme was already beginning to have his doubts. Looking forward to the conquest of Bengal, increasingly he began to fear that the deeds he would have to chronicle in the future would be nowhere as worthy or as honourable as those which had gone before.

> I have wrote one book which comprises the loss of Calcutta and I have looked forward into the subject far enough to see that the Bengal transactions will not do my countrymen so much honour as they have received from the first volume.[134]

The revelations of financial misconduct in Bengal left Orme deeply disillusioned and increasingly he began to find the subject going cold for him:

> It is these cursed presents which stop my History. Why should I be doomed to commemorate the ignominy of my countrymen, and without giving the money story that has accompanied every event since the first of April 1757. I shall not relate all the springs of the action.[135]

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132 Ibid. Orme - J. Smith, Nov. 20 1767, p.164.

133 OV.37, R. Smith - Orme, April 1767, pp.116-17.

134 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1766, p.124.

135 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Nov.18 1767, p.167.

Clearly the patriotic historian in him found it deeply repugnant to have to preside over such disgraceful and dishonourable activities.

Orme's growing disillusionment was exacerbated by his persistent financial worries and recurrent ill health. The poor sales of the first volume of the **History** had left Orme deeply pessimistic about the future. Obtaining information was a painstaking and laborious process.[136] It was also a very protracted and highly expensive one. With only his own small income to rely on Orme found it more and more difficult to make ends meet and he was starting to see the spectre of poverty looming up over the horizon.

> Don't be surprised if you can hear of me immersed again in Debtors and Creditors; for I will not starve through indolence; the name that will then be given to an occupation of more labour than half the business of the Royal Exchange.[137]

In addition, recurring bouts of ill health left Orme almost crippled for long periods of time. In 1768 he became so ill that from February to May he could hardly even write a letter.[138] The next year he suffered even more from a stone in his kidneys. This left him emaciated to the very bone and confined to his house for a period of almost three months from the beginning of January to the end of March.[139] Writing to Richard Smith in May he admitted that even now he had only left the house once and could still only write on cards leaning back in his chair.[140] In the circumstances, he found the effort of working on the **History** more and more exhausting: "I am called upon to continue the history. I will if God spares my life. You know how I suffer with my own hand else I would write you long letters."[141]

Thus, far from being the driving ambition of his life, by the latter part of the decade the **History** had become a laborious and painful business. Not surprisingly, progress was painfully slow. It was not until well into 1765 that Orme even began writing

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136 Ibid. Orme - Clive, Sept. 21 1764, p.114.

137 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, March 28 1766, p.131.

138 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Oct.24 1768. p.170.

139 OV.202, Orme - R. Smith, May 7 1769, p.19.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid. Orme - J. Smith, Dec.2 1769, pp.27-8.

the opening pages of his second volume.[142] In this he intended to tell the story of the conquest of Bengal and the final struggle with the French in the South. However by February 1766 he had only got as far as the capture of Calcutta.[143] Almost exactly a year later he had only reached page 120,[144] barely a sixth of the estimated length. So slow was his rate of progress, that Orme himself forecast that he did not expect to finish the second volume until 1775.[145] It was to prove a prophetic guess.

Nevertheless Orme continued to struggle on and finally his efforts were rewarded. In 1769 he was made the first official Historiographer of the East India Company and awarded a salary of £400 a year.[146] He was also given complete freedom of access to the Company's records and papers at India House, for which he had been struggling for several years.[147] Finally, it seemed, he was to be given the official recognition and encouragement, which he had been denied for so long.

Although origins of this appointment are rather unclear, it does seem that it was strongly influenced by Orme's political connections. Orme's one-time close associate, George Colebrook was now the Chairman of Directors, while Laurence Sulivan too, had come back into the ranks of the Directors. Orme had just thrown in his lot with Sulivan and his supporters, and in this respect, his connection with him seems especially significant. The Elections of 1769 had re-established Sulivan as a power to be reckoned with and it seems very likely that he must have had something to do with Orme's appointment. As for Colebrooke, even though Orme's relations with him had cooled since the former had thrown his lot with Clive, he does not appear to have broken with him completely. Indeed it was Colebrooke who wrote to Orme on the Director's behalf, offering him access to the records and asking that the **History** be printed "for the information and instruction of their servants abroad as well as for the public good."[148] Whatever the motives behind it, there is no denying that the appointment gave Orme the

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142 OV.222, Orme - Clive, April 27 1766, p.118.

143 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Mar.28 1766, p.132.

144 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1767, p.158.

145 Ibid. Orme - Clive, April 27 1766, p.118.

146 OV.202, Orme - J. Dupré, Dec.1 1769, p.25.

147 Ibid.

148 IOR. Home Correspondence, E/1/214, p.221.

official recognition and encouragement which he craved for. It left him in no doubt as to the value and importance of his work:

> I think myself much honoured by the request of the Court of Directors to publish the continuation of my history and esteem this testimony of their approbation as an obligation upon me to fulfil their wish with the utmost diligence that my health will permit.[149]

Altogether, it had been deeply trying decade for Orme. Both as a returned Indian servant and as a writer, his efforts had not brought him the measure of success which he had craved for. In the process, he had become extremely frustrated and deeply disillusioned. He had in fact, begun to lose all sense of purpose, direction and confidence. The appointment, when it came, went a long way towards restoring his confidence and self-belief. For Orme, who had for so long felt himself neglected and unappreciated it must have been a great moment. At long last, it seemed that his vocation as a historian had been justified. It must have gone a long way towards atoning for everything which he had suffered in the past.

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149 Ibid. E/1/52, number 234.

Appendix to Chapter III

Lauchlin Macleane and the First Great Stock Market Speculation (1766).

Orme's great adventure into the world of stock market speculation was the result of his close involvement with Lauchlin Macleane and his own pressing need for money. Although it has its origins in Orme's close contacts with Clive and his sharp eye for an opportunity, the scheme really owed its implementation to the nerve and precise organisation of Macleane.

Clive's achievements in Bengal, especially his recent acquisition of the Diwani, had made him very optimistic about the revenues the new province would provide. At first he estimated a clear profit of £1,650,900.[1] By the end of September 1765 his confidence had increased and he was forecasting even greater revenues. He wrote to Orme estimating a total income of almost £4,000,000.[2] Even after the expenses of defence and government had been deducted, he predicted a profit of at least £2,000,000. Clive's achievements and the manner in which he reported them prompted widespread rejoicing in England. Clive himself fully expected that the news would have a considerable impact on the price of East India stock. He wrote to many of his friends, advising them to invest in as much East India stock as possible, and instructed his attorneys to do the same. Large amounts of stock were purchased in Clive's name and by the 17th May 1766 Clive owned a total of £74,500 of India stock, with a market value of £129,630.[3] Although it had all been done in a very quiet way, so as not to force up the price of stock before the rescounter (day of settlement), Orme as one of Clive's entourage, would have known about it for some time.

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1 Bowen, "British Politics and the East India Company", vol.1 p.146.

2 OV.43, Clive - Orme, Sept.29 1765, p.31.

3 Bowen, "British Politics and the East India Company", vol.1, pp.148-9.

Clive's actions gave Orme the idea of forming a small consortium of his own which would buy India stock for the expected rise.[4] He had also fully expected that there would be an increase in the Dividend paid out on the stock. He had heard that a proposal was going to be made from amongst the Proprietors at the next Quarterly General Court for a 2% increase in the Dividend to 8%. Orme mentioned the idea to several people, amongst them Macleane, who recognised an opportunity worthy of his skill and daring.

Within a short time Macleane had roped in several other partners, who between them had the necessary resources or specialist know-how for large scale speculation. They were drawn principally from his and the Burkes' circle of friends and acquaintances. The consortium was to be divided into three syndicates, each entitled to an equal share in the profits and each equally responsible for its losses.

The major shareholder in the first syndicate was William Burke's patron, Ralph, 2nd Earl Verney, who is known to have contributed at least £10,000.[5] The second share was held by Isaac Panchaud, a prosperous Swiss banker. Panchaud ran a family banking business in Paris with his brother Jean François and occasionally worked in partnership with Thomas Foley, a British banker living there.[6] The Panchaud brothers visited London once a year, when they usually called on Joseph Hickey, the Burkes' lawyer. Thus it was probably through the Burkes that Orme and Macleane got to know them. The partners in the other syndicate were Macleane, Orme and Macleane's close friend and long time henchman, John Stuart.[7] They alone relied entirely on credit, and had engaged to return their stock at the rate of £140 for every £100 worth of stock which they borrowed.[8]

It was to be a three cornered venture, with branches in London, Paris and Amsterdam. John Stuart and Orme were left in charge of operations in London, Panchaud was in charge of the dealings on the Amsterdam stock exchange, where he was later joined by Macleane, while Thomas Foley handled business on the Paris

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4 OV.222, Orme - I. Panchaud, June 20 1766, p.136.

5 Ibid. Orme - Earl Verney, June 15 1766, p.138.

6 Ibid. Orme - I. Panchaud, June 24 1766, p.137.

7 Ibid. July 1 1766, p.139.

8 Ibid.

exchange. Lucy Sutherland estimated that the consortium originally intended to invest £30,000, with each of the three syndicates contributing about £10,000.[9]

The success of the whole operation depended largely on the news the next ship from India brought about Clive. Confidence in East India stock rested on the continuing prosperity of the subject provinces, and the continuing supremacy of British arms; this in turn was felt to depend almost entirely on Clive's wellbeing. As much as Clive's wellbeing, the investment also depended on the time-lag between England and India, and then between Paris and Amsterdam.[10] An East India ship would normally take at least six months to sail from India to England. Then there was a further time lag before the news reached the stock exchanges at Amsterdam and Paris from England. What Macleane and his partners had to do was to ensure that the moment any news arrived in London, it was transmitted to Foley at Paris and Panchaud at Amsterdam, ahead of the scheduled mail carriers and before it became common knowledge in those places. This would enable both Panchaud and Foley to buy large amounts of stock while the price was still low. Major Allan Macleane, another old henchman of Lauchlin Macleane's, was deputed to be the messenger boy, and he was entrusted with the task of outrunning the stages.

Although the stock had been rising sharply since the end of April, it was not until well into June that Orme's and Macleane's syndicate swung into action. On the 18th June Macleane left London to join Panchaud at Amsterdam, shortly after a meeting of the General Court of Proprietors.[11] The role to be played by Orme was to be that of inside contact at East India House; his job was to collect accurate information and pass it on with all possible speed to his colleagues. In this respect, his regular access to and acquaintance with many of the Directors, as well as his close relationship with Clive made him an absolutely vital component in the operation.

Unfortunately, as Orme himself observed, he was a complete novice in the field and his commercial judgement tended to be very poor. He was depressed by the failure of the Proprietors to obtain the 2% increase in the Dividend at the

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9 L. S. Sutherland & J.A. Woods, " The East India Speculations of William Burke," in L. Sutherland, **Politics and Finance in the Eighteenth Century**, p.333.

10 **Maclean, Reward is Secondary**, p.159.

11 OV.222, June 20 1766, Orme - I. Panchaud, p.136.

General Court on 13th June and very worried by the consequent fall in the price of stock (which had dropped to 187½).

> Whatever, therefore, may be the state of your purchase on receipt of this letter, if not exceeding £30,000 I would advise you to stand out for the rescounter by which time the arrival of a ship will bring up the stock from the fall it has suffered (by this over prudent conduct of the Directors) to the price of which you purchased.[12]

Indeed it made him profoundly pessimistic about the outcome of the whole operation.

> No news will make them raise (the dividend) above 2%. So that any great strokes will never be struck in it excepting by men, who can purchase on their own money and wait the event for 18 months together ..... It gives me some pain that this adventure in which you are engaged ..... should be likely to conclude with so little advantage; if not with detriment and loss.[13]

On the 24th of June Orme wrote again to Panchaud; this time to report that he had received a letter from Clive, which made no reference at all to the rumours of a great upheaval in India, which were then flying about. Therefore, he assured Panchaud, they could afford to discount the rumour that a native army of 200,000 had entered India and sacked Delhi. As for the stock itself :

> The stock for the Rescounter holds the same as I wrote you last post, that is on Saturday yesterday and today @ 187½. So that I continue in my opinion to stand the event without selling out more than you might have done.[14]

By the 25th of June, the stock had started to rise again, Orme informed Verney that it had increased to 189½ and believed that it would rise to 200 by the time of the rescounter in August.[15]

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12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid. June 24 1766, p.137.

15 Ibid. Orme - Earl Verney, June 25 1766, p.138.

Two days later Orme was starting to sound even more positive, despite a slight fall in the price of stock from 191 on the 26th back to 190/190½ on the 27th. The only thing they had to guard against was the possibility of Clive's death:

> The news from India is stale and scarcely deserves the name of an extraordinary event; it had no effect on Lord Clive's conduct. The only thing we have to fear is his death. If he was well when the ship sailed from Bengal all will go well at the rescounter.....I attribute the fall today to its being the end of the week, so that all looks well.[16]

Despite this, Orme still remained very cautious: " I did not buy more stock in London because I am a novice in this business and because I could not know how far your purchases might have extended."[17] Macleane and Panchaud noted Orme's warning and responded by insuring Clive's life heavily until Orme himself called a halt: " Insure no more on Clive's life until you have heard from me. He was perfectly well with the fine season before him on the 17th November (1765)."[18]

Encouraged by the way things were going, Macleane formulated a plan to expand their activities even further. Little is known about the nature of " the Great Scheme", as Orme referred to it; but we do know that it involved increasing their commitments, and carrying on after the August rescounters till at least the end of the year.[19] Orme himself, keen though he was, had to decline the opportunity due to lack of resources:

> I wrote a line by the last post (Friday) to Mr. Macleane advising the receipt of your letter to Lord Verney with the great scheme, and at the same time signifying my entire approbation of the measure. But it was not in my power to declare myself a party concerned, because I knew not from whence to get the ready money requisite for engaging in it.[20]

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16 Ibid. Orme - Unknown, June 27 1766, p.138.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid. Orme - I Panchaud, July 4 1766, p.141.

19 Sutherland, **Politics and Finance**, p.334.

20 OV.222, Orme - I. Panchaud, July 1 1766, p.139

As he explained to Panchaud, he could not join in the extended operation, because he could not borrow for it and because all his other monies were tied up.

> All I am worth in the world is out in situations and concerns from which I cannot recall money at Pleasure; and having no lands or manifest mercantile properties what have I to offer in security for so large a loan and who will lend without security.[21]

Neither could he hope to purchase more stock by mortgaging his future investment because of the terms of the loan through which he, Macleane and Stuart had financed their first investment:

> Were I to purchase as a single unconnected party, I might perhaps raise the money by giving the stock I should purchase as security, and my bond might be accepted to make up the deficiency in case a loss should arise on the stock I might have purchased, but in the joint concern amongst 3 shares, Macleane, Stuart and I are as one share precluded from that advantage, because the total stock purchased will be previously engaged as security for the loan.[22]

However, it is clear that he intended to carry on with his support for the original scheme and planned to hold on till the rescounter in August when they would settle up:

> Should therefore at the rescounters my situation be as it is at present Lord Verney and you will go on between you from that time. Until that time all purchases stand as at present, and it will be very easy at the rescounters to settle what loss or profit will be forthcoming to Macleane, Stuart and Orme as proprietors of one third of the adventure.[23]

By July 1st all Orme's doubts and fears had evaporated. Over the weekend or maybe just after, Orme received the vital news which put his mind at rest:

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

> On Saturday Lady Clive received a letter from Bengal dated November 7th. It was from Mr. Strachey, Lord Clive's Secretary and Lord Clive was at that time well in Calcutta and every thing in the provinces was quiet.[24]

Orme's contacts had paid off at last. This was the all important go ahead;Clive's good health meant that the price of stock was bound to spiral upwards. The effect on Orme was instantaneous. Overnight it transformed him from a worried, hesitant figure into a bold and confident man of action .

> This I esteem a piece of good news and upon the strength of it I went yesterday into the city, where to my surprise I found that some credit was given to Mr. Law's nonsense and the 7th November news was esteemed a lie put into the papers in order to raise the stock which was at 189½. Having Lady Clive's letter in my pocket, I immediately ordered £5,000 more to be purchased gently, par a par, as I advise you always to proceed in your purchases in future. I have just now received a note from my broker, signifying that he has purchased nothing on my last commission for £5,000 because he could not get any under 190, the stock market today being at 189½. I shall be in the city tomorrow to act.[25]

In the days that followed Orme's mood remained much the same and on the 4th July he was still bubbling over with joy and excitement:

> My last letter explained to you fully my situation, which is something like that of Sir John Falstaff. Let any man lend me £1000 and I will cut a caper with him for the money.[26]

There is also the suggestion that it may have changed his attitude towards Macleane's Great Scheme: " Pardon my being jocular for I am very serious, and never was more desirous to engage in anything than in your scheme."[27] However, we do not have any further evidence for this, and can attribute it to the spur of the moment.

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24 Ibid. pp.139-40.

25 Ibid. p.140.

26 Ibid. July 4 1766, p.140.

27 Ibid.

By the time the rescounter eventually came around in August, India stock had climbed to 230.[28] Whatever the extent of their final investment, it is sure that Macleane, Stuart and Orme had made a sizeable profit. The terms of their original loan demanded a repayment of £140 for £100 of stock they had borrowed. As every unit they had borrowed had risen in value to £230, they made a profit of £90 on every unit.[29] Assuming that the three partners had remained content with their original investment of only £10,000 worth of stock, we can speculate that at the very least, each of them made a profit. However, the evidence suggests that as time wore on, the original investment of £30,000 was left some way behind. First of all, £24,000 of stock was purchased by Panchaud in Amsterdam, then five days later £10,000 of stock was purchased in Amsterdam by Panchaud on Verney's orders, which was added to the common fund. Finally there are the documented attempts by Orme on the 1st July to purchase further substantial sums. We have no means of knowing if he succeeded; neither do we know how much stock the consortium bought in Paris and Amsterdam in the days following. Given the stakes involved, and especially considering the news Orme had just received, it is highly likely that any of the parties passed up on it. In November all the accounts were settled, and Orme in particular, had every reason to be thankful for the generous way in which the consortium had treated him.[30] Although the episode did not have the effect of making Orme seriously rich, it did improve his finances considerably. It enabled him to live rather more securely and comfortably than he had in the past.

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28 Ibid. Orme - Unknown, Aug.23 1766, p.141.

29 Maclean, **Reward is Secondary**, p.168.

30 OV.222, Orme - Panchaud, Nov.15 1766, p.142.

Chapter IV

A Vocation Rediscovered (1770-80)

The appointment as official Historiographer was a major turning point in Orme's career. It dispelled the doubt and disillusionment which had undermined his enthusiasm for his work in the past and confirmed Orme's faith in his own abilities and choice of vocation. Thus he returned to his **History** with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. In the years to come, Orme was to devote an ever increasing proportion of his time to his studies, which gradually became the focus of his attentions. Hitherto scholarly and literary pursuits had been merely the means to an end, henceforth they were to become an end in themselves.

In order to devote more time to his **History,** Orme resolved to become a man of business and he engaged in a variety of schemes and enterprises. This he hoped, would provide him with a small additional income, which would free him from everyday domestic worries and enable him to concentrate on his work:

> In order to enable me to enjoy the hours of study with that tranquillity and repose, which can only accompany those who know matters are right at home, and without which, all the labours of the mind are multiplied by unseen perplexities and interruptions.[1]

For a time Orme contemplated becoming a diamond factor,[2] in partnership with Richard Smith, and wrote eagerly to his friends in India, urging them to make their consignments through him. Meanwhile, he turned to one other old friend, Joseph Smith, for a loan of £5,000 with which to engage in another business venture.[3] In his need for money he also became involved in the tangled financial affairs of his friend Lauchlin Macleane.

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1 OV.202, Orme - J. Alexander, May 30 1770, p.37.

2 Ibid. Orme - J. Smith, May 30 1770, pp.37-8.

3 Ibid. Jan.6 1770, p.33.

Macleane, who had speculated so successfully in 1766, had tried to repeat his success on an even larger scale in 1769, in what he referred to as the 'Great Scheme'. The scare of 1769, when Hyder Ali appeared on the verge of seizing Madras had resulted in a great fall in the value of East India Stock. Macleane and his associates, who had accumulated huge amounts of India stock, were completely ruined. By 1770, the only major asset which Macleane had left, was a £20,000 stake he shared with John Stuart in a West Indian land syndicate, principally on the islands of Grenada and Dominica. In return for ready cash, Macleane had mortgaged this joint share to Lord Verney.[4] However, when the time came to hand over the deeds, Macleane refused to comply and Verney had no option but to sue. Orme, who was trusted by both parties, was asked to step in and mediate. He discovered that Macleane's failure to comply with Verney's demands was because of the hopeless muddle which the land titles were in: even Macleane did not know where he stood. Orme offered to sort out the tangle and put everything in order. Delighted, Macleane and Stuart took up his offer, and Orme began to act as their agent. In return, presumably, he must have been promised a share in the estates.

Orme suggested that trustees be appointed to act on behalf of the entire syndicate, most of whom were either long time friends or business associates of Macleane and Stuart. His suggestion was adopted and in 1770 Orme, along with John Hankey and Peter Simond, partners in a firm of Bishopsgate merchants, were appointed as official trustees.[5] The other members of the syndicate were Aaron Franks, a well known merchant financier of Bishopsgate, General Robert Monckton, and an old friend of Macleane's, William Ridge, a squire of Berwick-on-Tweed. The remaining members were an Irishman, Clotworthy Upton, later first Baron Templetown, Richard Cumberland, a London actor-dramatist and Sir Charles Bunbury, an M.P. and heir to a baronetcy. Out of these, only Cumberland, Ridge and Bunbury took any share of the burden, which in the end devolved mostly on Orme. Almost immediately, Orme authorised a series of sweeping changes. He arranged that each proprietor was to advance the sum of £1,000 towards the expenses and

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4 Maclean, Reward Is Secondary, p.251.

5 OV.202, Orme - Aaron Franks (undated), p.63.

running costs of the estates.[6] He also replaced many of the personnel who had previously been responsible for the estates.[7] In the long term his aim was to sell all the estates and distribute the money amongst the shareholders. In the meantime, whilst sorting out the land titles and finding suitable buyers, Orme was determined that the estates should be run at a profit.[8]

This was to prove nowhere near as straight forward as Orme had imagined. Grenada and Dominica had only been in British hands since 1763, when they had been ceded by the French as a result of the Treaty of Paris.[9] Much of the available property was virgin land, still largely uncultivated. Macleane's failure to legalise the titles of the lands he had grabbed made the trustees' task even more difficult, and a year later, the picture still remained as confused and entangled as ever. In Dominica, for example, Orme found that attorneys he had appointed had not been able to make any land sales at all, because they still had not succeeded in establishing what areas the syndicate actually owned.[10] Moreover, far from providing a quick return, the estates continued to demand more and more investment to buy the cattle, slaves and other supplies, which were needed to make them profitable. Together with Bunbury, Orme decided that what was needed was a further investment of £3,000 by each party.[11] Then he found himself faced with the uphill task of rounding up the other investors and nagging them till they contributed. He also proposed that all the estates be entrusted to the management of one person on the spot, who would act for the whole group as if it were his own interest.[12] To this purpose he installed William Ridge Jnr., the son of one of the proprietors, as the syndicate's agent in the West Indies. Ridge was to travel out to the West Indies,

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid. Orme - Sir C. Bunbury, Aug.20 1771, p.59.

8 Maclean, **Reward Is Secondary**, p.251.

9 D.H. Murdoch, " Land Policy in the Eighteenth Century British Empire: the Sale of Crown Lands in the Ceded Islands, 1763-1783", **Historical Journal**, vol.27 (1984), pp.549-574.

10 OV.202, Orme - Sir C. Bunbury, Aug.20 1771, p.59.

11 Ibid. Orme - Aaron Franks (undated), p.63.

12 Ibid. Orme - Sir C. Bunbury, Aug.20 1771, p.59.

where he would be paid a regular salary and stay for as long as was necessary, that is, until the estates were running at their most effective.[13]

However, all Orme's efforts were to no avail. There was no quick return to be had, and in the years to come the West Indian properties were to prove a constant, not to mention unprofitable, drain on his time and energies. By the summer of 1772, William Ridge had reached Grenada. The report he sent in on the real state of affairs left Orme close to despair: " Never I believe was such an unfortunate purchase as we are plunged into. I cannot conceive how so much neglect can have taken place in the Islands." [14] His gloom was temporarily relieved by the prospect of the sale of the two largest estates, even though the offers which had been made were barely half the anticipated amount. However, the financial crash of 1772 changed everything, and within a short time both buyers had pulled out.[15] By now the strain of coping with all the endless difficulties, almost singlehandedly, was also beginning to take its toll on Orme, who found his responsibilities increasingly onerous and futile.[16]

Orme's involvement in Macleane's other business ventures was also to do him little good. Macleane's attempts to bail himself out, after the debacle of 1769, had led to further speculation on the stockmarket. These efforts too did not prove a great success, and as a result, Orme, who had joined him, found himself saddled with some very sizeable debts. His liabilities, both on the continent and at home, were not inconsiderable. He owed £1,000 to Panchaud's company in Paris,[17] and also a large sum to Gerrit Blaauw, an Amsterdam merchant,[18] who, like Panchaud, had also speculated in large amounts of India stock on Macleane's behalf. At home, he had a long standing debt of £400 with Sir George Colebrooke, which he had contracted as early as 1771 or 1772,[19] while he owed at least £500 to Jacob

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13 Ibid.

14 Ibid. Orme - W. Ridge, July 1 1772, p.90.

15 Ibid. Sept.25 1772, p.93.

16 Ibid. p.94.

17 Ibid. Orme - Col. G. Stibbert, March 3 1775, p.45.

18 Ibid. Orme - L. Macleane, Feb.16 1775, p.42.

19 Ibid.

Wilkinson,[20] a supporter of Lord Rockingham's. With Macleane's support however, Orme was eventually able to meet the greater part of his obligations. To satisfy the rest of his creditors, some of whom, like Wilkinson's were on the point of litigation[21] Orme indulged in some complex financial arrangements, with Macleane playing a shadowy role in the background. Mindful of the legions of creditors whom Macleane had left behind him in England, Orme was careful to keep Macleane's involvement a secret, and not draw on him directly. With the assistance of his friend, the banker, John Motteaux, Orme was able to raise the money to pay Panchaud, Blaauw and Wilkinson. To pay Panchaud, for example, Motteaux agreed to lend Orme the ready cash which he needed.[22] Orme, in his turn, provided security in the form of Bills drawn on Company servants, who were going out to India,[23] on the understanding that they would be reimbursed by Macleane in Bengal.[24]

As we have seen, Orme's attempts to become a man of business were not a great success. Indeed his multifarious business dealings had only taken him further into debt. By 1775 Orme had been able to settle the majority of these debts. However, his business endeavours had diminished his capital even further, and he found himself having to rely almost entirely on his salary from the Company.[25]

Nevertheless, these problems did not diminish Orme's rediscovered enthusiasm for his **History.** Recharged and reinvigorated, Orme returned to the **History** with renewed energy and sense of purpose. Orme's relative freedom from illness during this period also proved a great boon, and it enabled him to drive himself much harder than in the past; which without doubt, was what Orme did. He devoted more and more of his time to his work and drove himself harder than ever before. As well as working on the second volume of the **History,** Orme was also hard at work, revising and re-editing his first volume; for which he was also preparing an index. The preparation of the index, which Orme had to do entirely on his own, was

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20 Ibid. Orme - Macleane, March 3 1775, p.47.

21 Ibid. Feb.16 1775, p.42

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid. Orme - Col. G. Stibbert, March 3 1775, p.45.

24 Ibid. Feb.16 1775, p.41.

25 Ibid. Orme - W. Hosea, Oct.26 1776, pp.115-16.

a hard and laborious task. However, he was not to be put off and attacked his task with unremitting energy.[26]

The first volume of the **History** was republished in 1775, after which Orme returned to devote his energies to finishing off Volume Two. By the winter of 1776 he had made real progress:

> I have 420 pages, printed in a private copy of the story of my second volume, which I intend to conclude with the capture of Pondicherry: and that length will I think carry me to 650 pages of which I hope to drop about 100 in the course of the press for publication.[27]

By now, Orme had moved on from the Bengal story, which he had found so distasteful, and had returned to writing about the final struggle between the English and the French in the Carnatic. This was a much more clear-cut, straightforward tale of martial endeavour and great battles, and Orme clearly found it much more congenial:

> But the important and nearer contest, already opened between the English and the French nations in the Carnatic, continues from this time forth with such incessant energy, that our narrative, once engaged, cannot quit their operations ....[28]

As he had with the second edition, Orme displayed a degree of application and commitment, which had been markedly lacking in the past. As he confessed to a friend, he no longer even had time to write letters:

> A stonecutter might copy all the letters I write in a year, witness my five lines to you by the man of war ..... But when you consider that no man sees my face, or squeezes my hand, without a " Mr. Orme when shall we have your 2nd volume" you will account for the employment of my pen.[29]

Orme was still busy writing in the winter of 1777, and it was not until early in 1778, that he began to approach the final stages. His narrative of the

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26 Ibid. Orme - R. Orme - Smith, Dec.14 1775, p.107.

27 Ibid. Orme - A. Dalrymple, Oct.26 1776, p.117.

28 **History**(1778), vol.2, pp.364-5.

29 OV.202, Orme - C. Floyer, Dec.30 1776, p.120.

decisive battle of Wandewash, which formed his penultimate chapter, was not written until February 1778. It was written during a stay in Paris and all in French, in order that General Bussy, the French commander, could first examine it.[30] By June he had almost finished everything and a few months later, the second volume of **History** was finally published.

This volume told the story of the final phase of the Anglo-French conflict in India, from 1756-1760. Beginning with the sack of Calcutta in 1756 by Siraj-ud-Daula, Orme went on to tell the story of the expedition which was despatched for its recovery under Clive. The Bengal War, as he termed it, ended with the overthrow of the Nawab at the battle of Plassey, and the establishment of British power in Bengal. Thereafter Orme concentrated on the war in the South. After initially threatening to sweep all before them, the French advance had finally been halted outside Madras in 1758. Thereafter, the tide turned inexorably in favour of the British. The French were forced to abandon the siege of Madras and significant successes were recorded against them on land and sea. In 1759 at the battle of Wandewash, the English, led by Eyre Coote, gained an overwhelming victory over the French forces. This paved the way for the siege of Pondicherry, the capital of French India. Orme's narrative ended on a high point of British success, with the fall of Pondicherry in 1761 and with it the final demise of French ambitions in India.

As with the first volume, the general reaction was extremely favourable; nearly all the reviews agreed that Orme had succeeded in satisfying most of the historical and literary criteria of the day. Orme and his " Indian History" had clearly arrived on the literary scene. By now, he was a well known and highly respected figure in intellectual and literary circles. Boswell, for example, appears to have gone to some pains to seek him out, and he draws an evocative portrait of Orme at this stage in his life.

Boswell found him the epitome of the gentleman-scholar; elegant, fastidious but at the same time utterly devoted to his work. Although his labours had not been especially profitable in the past, while the future too, as Boswell hinted, often seemed very uncertain, Orme seemed quite content with his lot. He derived

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30 OV.63, Jan.-Feb. 1778, pp.85-115.

great satisfaction from his work, which he now found extremely rewarding. The most important thing in his life was clearly his studies, and Boswell marvelled at the single-minded manner in which Orme devoted every waking hour to them:

> Then called on Orme: sent in my name and he recollected me. Found a quite gentlemanly but most laborious author (elegant room, fine suit with satin lining, coat older and easier than rest of suit, new coat on chair), working hard with plans of towns and fortifications, and advancing with unremitting progress in his history of the British war in the East Indies. He showed me a page and a half of resolutions which he said was the abstract of thirty pages; that it had cost him - days to do it. Showed me some sheets. Said all his papers at large would be left behind him. I could not but wonder how a man could devote himself to incessant labour (for he said that since his return from France five months ago, he had not been five times out of his house), while life was so uncertain. But there is a luxury in study, and he is fed with fame per avance.[31]

For all his unremitting toil and application, first and foremost Orme considered himself to be a gentleman, only then was he a scholar. As such, he was acutely conscious of his dignity and sense of status, which he felt made him very different from the ordinary run of writers and intellectuals. He confessed to Boswell, that it had galled him enormously while he was in France that he had not been regarded with the respect which his social station deserved:

> He (Orme) told me that he was born a gentleman (I liked to hear him talk so, and must examine a little into it when I see him again), and when he was in France he could not bear being looked on by the people of rank as they do on un philosophe, un savant, on whom they look down. At last an officer who had read his Indostan, made him be considered properly. For the French, being all à la miltaire, esteem a man who writes on their own profession.[32]

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31 **The Private Papers of James Boswell. Boswell in Extremes 1776-1778**, Ed. C. Mc.Weiss & F.A. Pottle (1971), p.280.

32 Ibid. p.282.

At the same time, Boswell found Orme to be a very cultured and highly erudite figure. He retained the great fondness for poetry which he had shown in his youth and was given to composing his own verse:

> He (Orme) talked of poetry. I asked him if he had written any poetry. He said yes, but on my asking said he had published none. He began with poetry, and had he applied to it, believed he should have excelled (or made proficiency, or some such expression). Even now when he read in Juvenal or Virgil, of whose Georgics he was very fond, he insensibly translated into English poetry. Said I, " Your mind reflects it in poetry." " For instance," said he " ox-provoking fly" (repeating two lines). Said he, " 'Tis horsefly on the original, but I think better applied to the ox". " Yes," said I, " and so far as I know, 'tis a new image. It would make a fine Greek compound word." He agreed. I loved to see his Oriental warmth of mind, delighted with his own genius.[33]

Despite this reclusive lifestyle, it is clear that Boswell found Orme an interesting and highly congenial figure. Hardened socialite though Boswell was, Orme seems to have made a considerable impression on him: " This at Orme's was a good and singular scene, out of the common line of company of any sort, genteel or literary." [34]

From what Boswell says, it is clear that Orme was acquainted with many of the great cultural mandarins of the Literary Club, the most eminent intellectual circle of the time. For example, he knew both Dr. Johnson and Joshua Reynolds; Johnson, in particular, had made a great impression on him and Orme held him in very high regard:

> We talked of Dr. Johnson. He (Orme) said he had dined with him once at Sir Joshua's and supped with him once at Mrs. Cholmondeley's; and he expressed a high admiration of him. He said, " I do not care what he talks of. But I love better to hear him talk than anybody. He either gives you new ideas or new colouring ...."

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33 Ibid. p.281.

34 Ibid. p.282.

> I said, " Mr. Orme, I wish you would draw his character." " That," said he (I think he said so), " perhaps I may. But I must go through all his works, and cannot do it while he is alive." [35]

In his turn, Johnson too, appears to have held Orme in great esteem. Boswell, upon repeating Orme's opinion to the great man tells us that: " Johnson was much pleased with such praise from such a man as Orme." [36] Orme, who enjoyed a reputation as an authority on aesthetic matters, was also held in high regard by Joshua Reynolds, who was said to have actively sought him out.[37]

Although Orme had known Edmund Burke since 1764 the two men do not appear to have been very close. Burke was certainly familiar with Orme's **History,** on which he relied as a basic source of reference as he became increasingly involved in India affairs. This is especially the case in his campaign against the annexation of the Hindu kingdom of Tanjore, on behalf of the Nawab of Arcot. In the pamphlet which he produced in support of the Raja of Tanjore, entitled " An Enquiry into the Policy of making Conquests for the Mahometans," he relies on Orme to back up his emphasis on the deep rooted ambitions of the Nawab of Arcot:

> After an account of the surrender of Pondicherry Mr. Orme gives the following lively description, of the avaricious, ambitious and vindictive spirit of the Nabob. " The Nabob requested and expected that the army, after the necessary repose, would accompany him against such Chiefs and feudatories whom he wished, or had pretensions to call to account ..... He had not forgiven the rebellion of his half-brother Nazeabulla of Nelore, his indignation had never ceased against Morizally, the Killidar of Velore, and Arielore and Warriorpollam to the South, were suspected of hidden treasures" ..... [38]

However, it is highly unlikely that Orme was anything more than a secondary source of information for Burke. In his speeches and writings on the

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35 Ibid. p.281.

36 **Boswell's The Life of Johnson (1776-1780),** Ed. G.B. Hill, Revised L.F. Powell (Oxford, 1934), vol.3, p.284.

37 **Fragments,** p.liv.

38 **The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke. India: Madras and Bengal (1774-1785),** Ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford, 1981), vol.5, p.66.

Tanjore controversy Burke imagined the Nawab to be a man of wild and desperate ambition and depicted him as a Machiavellian monster of great capacity and cunning. The Nawab was well known to Orme and his fellow East Indians as an utterly timid and irresolute figure. Orme, who would have known this better than anyone, was hardly likely to see him in anywhere near so threatening a light. To be on terms with Burke and Johnson was to know many of the great intellectual figures of the time. However, the dearth of references to Orme in the papers of men like Burke, David Garrick and Joshua Reynolds, suggests that he was never really an intimate member of their circle. The impression which Boswell gives is that Orme was something of a recluse, who had to be coaxed and cajoled to show himself in public. For example, he recounted that he even had difficulty trying to persuade Orme to meet with Dr. Johnson.[39] All this suggests that Orme always remained more or less on the peripheries of the Literary Club set, more a respected outsider than anything else.

Orme appears to have been much closer to two of the other great scholars of the time; the Scottish historian William Robertson and the Orientalist William Jones. Orme who had been greatly influenced by the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, was immensely pleased and flattered to have earned the approval of one of its leading lights:

> I am now to thank you for your kind request of one of my books. Your expression of that request makes me proud. This very day came in the one I destined for you: it is a Second Edition not yet published. Keep it, my dear Sir, as a testimony of my regard, and as a mark of the great value I set upon your friendship and approbation.[40]

Robertson for his part, had the highest regard for Orme and his subject. He regarded him very much as a fellow traveller and urged him not to slacken his efforts:

> What progress do you make? I hope you do not relax your ardour in carrying on your work and that if the present age may not expect

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39 **Boswell in Extremes**, pp.281-2.

40 OV.176, Orme - W. Robertson, June 23 1773, p.159.

> to peruse the history of those extraordinary transactions you have seen, you will not deprive posterity of that satisfaction.[41]

In his turn Robertson kept Orme informed of the progress of his own project, the **History of America,** on which he was working at the time.

In the years to come the two men developed a warm friendship. They kept in frequent contact, discussing each other's work and freely exchanging opinions and information on all sorts of subjects. Orme, for example, studied Robertson's previous works, his **History of Scotland** and his **History of the Reign of Charles V** in detail, and returned them to Robertson with his opinions.[42] On a personal level too, their ties were also close. Robertson sought Orme's help on behalf of his nephew, William Bruce, who had become a Company civil servant and his two sons,[43] who were bound for India to seek their fortunes in the army. Orme, for his part, did his very best to help. He made considerable efforts on behalf of both Robertson's two sons[44] and was able to help William Bruce quite substantially.[45]

Of all Orme's literary friends, he was probably closest to William Jones. Although almost 18 years younger, Jones rapidly forged a strong friendship with Orme. Their relationship seems to have blossomed very quickly during the early part of the decade. In 1769 although Jones was full of praise for Orme's first volume and recommended it to his pupil, Viscount Althorp,[46] it does not seem that there was any personal acquaintance between them. By early 1772 however, the two men had become fast friends. They probably met through Joshua Reynolds, whom Jones had known since 1768. Jones, who had just finished his **Histoire de Nader Char** and was currently working on his **Persian Grammar** and his dissertation on oriental literature, was just beginning to establish his reputation as an oriental scholar. At this stage his knowledge of India was still quite rudimentary and he relied heavily on established

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41 **Fragments,** p.xxxv.

42 OV.176, Orme - W. Robertson, June 23 1778, p.159.

43 **Fragments,** pp.xxxviii-xxxix.

44 OV.202, Orme - Colonel Cosby, Feb.12 1781. p.143.

45 OV.30, W. Bruce - Orme, Feb.12 1772, pp.199-202.

46 **The Letters of Sir William Jones,** Ed. G. Cannon (Oxford, 1970), vol.1, p.26.

sources like D'Hérbelot's **Bibliothèque Orientale** and the **Histories** of Alexander Dow and Orme.[47]

Apart from their commitment to Oriental scholarship, intellectually and politically the two men also had a great deal in common. They shared a great love of classical literature; they frequently exchanged communications in Latin[48] and had involved discussions on the merits of classical authors:

> It is much to be regretted that the historical pieces of Lucceius are not preserved to us : by a letter or two of his which are extant, he seems to have been a man of exquisite parts and taste. Cicero declares himself charmed with his way of writing, which makes me think that his works would have been far preferable to those of Sallust and Tacitus, whom I cannot help considering as the first corrupters of the Roman language and eloquence.[49]

Both men also shared a great admiration for the values and virtues of classical Republicanism. They particularly admired Cicero, whom they regarded as a fighter against tyranny and oppression and who for them, personified all that was best about the Roman Republic. Jones in particular, modelled his life on Cicero and tried to emulate his career in law and politics.[50] Both were also men of strong independence and great individuality. Jones, who had taken a considerable risk in breaking his links with the Spencer family, who were his patrons and his friends, clearly recognised a kindred spirit in Orme.[51]

Jones had nothing but the greatest respect for Orme and his work, which seems to have made a lasting impression on him:

> Your history is not one of those books which a man reads once in a cursory manner, and then throws aside for ever; there is no end of

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47 S.N. Mukherjee, **Sir William Jones. A Study in Eighteenth Century British Attitudes to India** (Cambridge, 1968), p.46.

48 Jones, **Letters**, vol.1, pp.112-13.

49 Jones, **Letters**, vol.1, p.128.

50 Mukherjee, **Sir William Jones**, pp.30-1.

51 Jones, **Letters**, vol.1, p.128.

> reading and approving it, nor shall I ever desist giving myself that pleasure to the last year of my life.[52]

Given the similarity of their tastes and outlook, not to mention the great regard in which they held each other, it is not surprising that the two were frequently in each other's company. This is the impression given by a letter from Jones to his friend, the great pedagogue and intellectual Samuel Parr.[53] Parr was in the habit of holding regular dramatic performances at Harrow, where his pupils acted out scenes from Sophocles. Both Orme and Jones it would appear, were part of a clique which made a regular habit of attending these plays:

> Be so good as to let me know the precise hour in which the play will begin. I cannot leave till the afternoon, as Friday is a day for special cases in the Courts .... Let me beg you to secure a bed for me at the inn on Friday night; for though Orme, I suppose will return after the play, yet it is best to have a bed at all events.[54]

Orme also belonged to another social set; one which was far removed from the rarefied world of the great cultural mandarins of the Literary Club. This consisted of one or two of his old " Anglo-Indian" friends and the free and easy, rather dubious set formed by Lauchlin Macleane and his friends. Macleane himself was a swashbuckling character, given to heavy drinking and womanising, not to mention some very underhand political and commercial dealings. Some of his friends were even more dubious. Through his links with Macleane, Orme became well acquainted with the infamous John Wilkes, scandalmonger, outlaw and political exile for much of his career and an even more notorious roisterer. They would have had much in common with Orme's old friend Richard Smith, who had returned home in 1770, now a General and an enormously wealthy man. Gambler, patron of the turf, womaniser, Smith cut a larger than life figure on the English social scene.[55] Like Wilkes, he was a figure around whom controversy raged. Soon after his return, Smith

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52 Ibid. pp.127-8.

53 DNB, vol.5, pp.356-64.

54 Jones, Letters, vol.1, pp.173-4.

55 J.M. Holzman, The Nabobs in England. A Study of the Returned Anglo Indian 1760-1785 (New York, 1926), pp.73-4.

launched himself upon a long and scandalous series of attempts to have himself elected to the House of Commons. He made at least three attempts, all of which resulted in his election being overturned on the grounds of wholesale bribery and corruption. Finally in 1774 he was fined £1,000 and sentenced to six months in prison.[56] Smith's flamboyant lifestyle earned him a great many enemies, and in 1772 he was viciously satirised by Samuel Foote in his new play **The Nabob.**[57] In this, Foote characterised him as " Sir Matthew Mite", the personification of the newly enriched East Indian, who had returned home to try and buy his way into English society. In marked contrast to his rather formal relations with men like Johnson and Burke, Orme was much more closely associated with Macleane and Smith, both of whom remained his intimate friends. For all his intellectual and scholarly aspirations, it is ironic to think that at the same time Orme was also closely associated with some of the most controversial figures of his age.

Orme's links with John Wilkes are particularly interesting. Orme had probably known Wilkes since the 1760s, when Wilkes was the publisher of **The North Briton,** a periodical which was fiercely antagonistic to Lord Bute, and notorious for its attacks on Scottish influence and corruption in English politics.[58] We can trace the remnants of this sentiment in Orme's own reaction, many years later, to the appointment of Bute's son in law, Lord Macartney as Governor of Madras. This appointment in 1780 of Macartney, an outsider, and that of John Macpherson to the Supreme Council of Bengal, caused a great furore and encountered bitter opposition both in Parliament and in the Company. Old fashioned though it was, Orme's own pronouncement on the issue echoed the line which Wilkes had taken so many years earlier: " it is not wonderful as the Scotch influence is supreme in England." [59]

During the 1760s and early 1770s, Wilkes acquired great renown as a political icon in the eyes of both the masses and the middle classes. He came to symbolise political liberty and the integrity of the constitution, which, it was widely felt, was being endangered by the tyranny of a corrupt and unrepresentative

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56 Ibid. p.51.

57 S. Foote, The Nabob (1778).

58 A. Williamson, Wilkes, 'A Friend to Liberty' (1974), pp.56-7.

59 OV.214, Orme - W. Hosea, Aug.20 1781, p.12.

Parliament.[60] Steeped as they were in the political legacy of the Roman Republic, it is not surprising that both Orme and Jones were very much attracted to the Wilkesite cause. In their eyes he must have seemed the champion of the English Republic, fighting off the encroaching tyranny of the executive which, as they well knew, had undermined the political liberty of Republican Rome. Well over a decade later they were still very much on his side, taking a great interest in Wilkes' efforts to have his expulsions from Parliament expunged from the Commons record:

> Our friend Orme showed me your excellent letter to the Electors of Middlesex on the total extinction and damnation of the shameful resolution concerning your election on which ..... I most heartily congratulate you.[61]

Orme's ties with Macleane remained close, even after the latter's departure for India. After a spell as Commissary General to the Bengal Army, Macleane began forging a close involvement with the Nawab of Arcot, becoming his personal agent in England. This was the result of Orme's acquaintance with John Macpherson, who had in 1769 come to England on an unofficial mission for the Nawab. During this period Macpherson had become acquainted with Orme, and when he returned to India in 1770 Orme provided him with letters of introduction to all his closest friends in Madras.[62] For most of his time Macpherson was deeply involved in the intrigues of the Nawab's Durbar, often in competition with Paul Benfield and in 1774 he was partly responsible for the plan whereby Macleane became the Nawab's agent. Macleane's new role however, did not last long. Returning to England after a lightning mission to India, he was drowned off the Cape of Good Hope. Orme, along with John Motteaux and Andrew Stuart were named as the executors of his will.[63] Stuart refused to have anything to do with it, so it was left to Orme and Motteaux to shoulder the burden. It is a reflection of Orme's loyalty and affection for his old friend that he did all he could to implement

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60 I.R. Christie, **Wilkes, Wyville and Reform. The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics 1760-85** (1962), p.32.

61 Jones, **Letters**, vol.2, p.540.

62 OV.202, Orme - Brig. Gen. J. Smith, March 22 1770, p.36.

63 Maclean, **Reward Is Secondary**, pp.446-9.

Macleane's wishes and look after his family. The executors did their best to realise the money owing to Macleane and made several claims against the Nawab of Arcot. They approached at least two sets of attorneys on Macleane's behalf, turning in 1781 to the firm of Cosby and Passly, after their first choice Oakley, Pelling & Sons had refused to help.[64] They even went to Court in order to protect what was left of Macleane's estate, and in 1779 Orme started Chancery proceedings against a William Brymer for the return of some jewels, which Macleane had deposited with him.[65] Orme also went to considerable lengths to protect Macleane's offspring. He found Macleane's eleven year old son employment as a clerk with his solicitor William Hamilton, and helped him enter the East India Company's Army when he was eighteen.[66]

Whatever his faults, Orme did have a great capacity for friendship and he was a warmhearted and sympathetic friend. Unlike Macleane, who seldom felt any compunction for anyone caught up in his dealings, Orme was genuinely moved, and tried hard to persuade Macleane to take an interest in the desperate plight of some of his former business associates. For example, he went to great lengths on behalf of Isaac Panchaud and John Motteaux, both friends of his, who had been almost ruined in the failure of Macleane's stock speculations:

> My Dear Sir, I grieve for Panchaud. I received the enclosed last night from him and Mr. Motteaux. It is, I suppose the 10th letter I have received from them on this subject. Can't you see Mr. Aaron Franks, that I may at least tell them what hopes there are of relief to Panchaud's distress.[67]

Despite his conceited and occasionally rather arrogant nature, Orme also inspired great affection and devotion in those who became his friends. His dubhash Sunku Rama, for instance, with whom Orme maintained warm and regular contact, remained quite devoted to him right up to his death in 1777. Orme for his part was very touched by this devotion: " I have great pleasure in thinking of the gratitude you

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64 OV.202, Orme - Col. H. Cosby, July 7 1781, pp.149-50.

65 PRO, Chancery Proceedings, C12/577/22, Orme v W. Brymer, 1779.

66 Maclean, **Reward Is Secondary**, p.439.

67 OV.202, Orme - L. Macleane, Oct.8 1771, p.67.

preserved towards me, not withstanding it is so long that I have left Madras." [68] He in turn did everything he could to help his old servant and his family.

Orme also remained devoted to his two nephews, William Hosea and Robert Orme-Smith, over whom he maintained a constant and watchful eye. Through the efforts of his friends he managed to get Hosea appointed as Secretary to the Bengal Select Committee and on the road to a good career. He also got Bob Orme-Smith's career off to a good start by having him appointed a Writer in the Company service and second on the list.[69] Hosea, the elder of the two, was conscientious and hard working and was soon making rapid headway. By 1773 he had been made Collector of the Hughly District, near Calcutta and by 1777 he had high hopes of succeeding to the Chiefship of Patna. Of the two Orme was particularly close to Hosea, with whom he regularly exchanged news, poems and books. It was on the responsible Hosea that he laid the charge of looking after his other nephew, the rather more wayward Bob Orme-Smith. Hosea, in his turn, assured his uncle that he would do everything he could for his younger cousin.[70]

The irresponsible Bob inspired very mixed reactions in his uncle. Orme vacillated between indulgence and angry concern at his nephew's behaviour, especially as regards his apparent profligacy with money. What is not in dispute, however, was his enormous affection for his nephew for he showed a touching readiness to forgive Bob's recurring lapses: " Yes my child I forgive you from the very bottom of my heart, and nothing will give me as much pain, ever to have any occasion to forgive you in future," [71] Both nephews, though, clearly returned his affection; Hosea in particular, we know, had the greatest regard for him

About this time it begins to emerge that Orme, quite unknown to anyone, had in fact got married. In 1772, Robert Fairful, an old Bombay acquaintance of Orme's, wrote to him thanking Orme for everything he had done for him; he also extended his best wishes to Mrs. Orme.[72] This is the first and almost

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68 Ibid. Orme - Sunku Rama, Dec.6 1771, p.79.

69 Ibid. Orme - R. Orme-Smith, Dec.14 1775, p.107.

70 OV.91, W. Hosea - Orme, March 3 1777, p.107.

71 OV.202, Orme - R. Orme-Smith, Dec.14 1775, p.106.

72 OV.72, R. Fairful - Orme, Oct.11 1772, p.269.

the only reference which is made to Orme's marriage. The only other clue which we have, is a reference which Orme himself makes to a live-in companion back in 1768. Writing to Richard Smith about the upbringing of Smith's young son, Orme expressed his fears that the boy might be spoiled and molly-coddled if he continued to stay at home:

> His grandmother and mother would spoil him, but the Mother much less and I have at home a friend who would have spoiled him too, for it is the nature of women to spoil the boys.[73]

One can speculate that Orme's marriage was the result of this relationship and that the live-in companion was eventually to become Mrs. Orme. However, the whole affair is surrounded in secrecy. Orme kept the news of his marriage from both his family and his close friends, many of whom only became aware of it after his death. This suggests that the marriage itself must have been a complete social mismatch, brought on perhaps by Orme's philandering ways. In the end, it seems that he felt he had no option but to keep quiet about it.

At East India House, Orme had very much thrown in his lot with the Sulivan party and was now closely associated with them. Most of the " East India" figures he remained on terms and moved with, tended to be men who were Sulivan supporters of long standing. Macleane, for example, had been firmly in the Sulivan camp for several years; as was George Dempster, whom Orme had begun to see increasingly frequently.[74] Similarly, John Roberts, a Director and one of Orme's closest friends was also a long standing adherent of Sulivan's. With the Sulivan-Colebrooke coalition in 1771, engineered in part by Macleane, Orme came back into Colebrooke's orbit. Like most of Sulivan's supporters he quickly became a firm supporter of the coalition, which he saw as absolutely vital to Sulivan's interests: " I wish Sir George was come to town or some advantage may be taken of his absence against S." [75] For it was this alliance which enabled Sulivan to become Deputy Chairman the following year under Colebrooke. Under Sulivan's guidance real efforts

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73 OV.202, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.8 1768, p.12.

74 Ibid. Dec.2 1769, p.26.

75 Ibid. Orme - L. Macleane, Sept. 15 1771, p.63.

were made to introduce a comprehensive policy of reform.[76] He and his supporters aimed to renew and correct the abuses in India by sending out another Supervising Commission, similar to that of 1769. They also planned to introduce legislation into Parliament to improve various aspects of the Company's organisation, especially its control over its servants, and to reform the constitution of Bengal; it was decided that the administration of Bengal had to be completely reorganised and that the Company itself should undertake the financial administration of the country.

The misgivings of the previous decade had by now crystallised in Orme's mind, and he was no longer under any doubt that things had to change. Sensational reports were reaching the general public about abuses and Company misrule in India.[77] The news of the horrors of the 1769-70 famine in Bengal and its loss of 3,000,000 lives was exaggerated by the propaganda of men like Alexander Dow, in his **History of Hindostan** and William Bolts, in his **Considerations on Indian Affairs.** Dow and Bolts attributed the sufferings of the Indians to the rapine and cruelty of the Company's servants, indirectly blaming Clive and many of the other returned Nabobs. By 1772 public anger had reached such a pitch that Orme felt sure that the entire system would soon be remodelled.[78]

By now Orme was well aware that the East India Company he had known was a thing of the past. He recognised that the vast revenues of Bengal had had a corrupting influence in the Company and had totally changed its nature: "The pickings, profits, emoluments, perquisites and appointments in Bengal in the reach of individuals are equal to the revenue of a petty sovereignty. Something too is to be got in the other parts of India".[79] In the circumstances, he felt it was not surprising that hardly anyone in the Company cared how it was run at home or abroad. The overriding motive for everyone within it was now one of pure greed or hope of self advancement:

> .... Think of all this together and do not wonder if there is not a single proprietor .... who cares three farthings whether he divides 12% or

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76 L.S. Sutherland, **The East India Company in Eighteenth Century Politics** (Oxford, 1952), p.217.

77 Ibid. p.219.

78 OV.202, Orme - J. Alexander, Feb.9 1772, p.88.

79 Ibid. Orme - J. DuPré, Dec.8 1771, p.81.

> 6% or who is in the Direction, or how the Company's affairs are either at home or abroad, provided he obtains the main end ..... which is either to buy or sell something to the Company or to provide for some friend or relation in some department of their service, or to give a vote to the head of some considerable party.[80]

Orme's apprehensions proved to be well founded, for in 1773 the Regulating Act was passed.[81] This gave the Government, for the first time, a share in the responsibility for the administration of India; giving it considerable powers of control over the Company, as well as inaugurating a number of reforms in its organisation. For all his recognition of the need for change, Orme remained, at heart, an old-fashioned Company man. In 1772 he had spoken out against Sulivan's attempts to control the activities of the Company's servants through Parliamentary legislation.[82] In one of his rare active interventions, he spoke in the General Court of Proprietors against the Company's attempts to lay fresh covenants upon their servants abroad. Thus it is hardly likely that he would have been very sympathetic to such a blatant intrusion of Government power as the Regulating Act. He continued to support the Sulivan party and its aims, and in 1775 we find Orme actively canvassing support for Sulivan in the forthcoming Elections:

> Tomorrow we are told that the house list will be determined. Mr. Sulivan is very desirous of obtaining the vote of Mr. Pigou and we his friends have no particular access to this gentleman. If I am not much mistaken a wish from you will go as far as a request from most others.[83]

Although he no longer played such an active role in Company politics, Orme found that he was able to command much more influence with the Sulivan group than he had ever enjoyed in his days with Clive. He certainly enjoyed some influence with Sulivan himself, as well as with many of Colebrooke's supporters.

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80 Ibid.

81 Sutherland, **East India Company**, p.248.

82 OV.43. W. Hosea - Orme, Feb.29 1773, p.220.

83 OV.202, Orme - R. Heron, March 28 1775, p.48.

Sulivan, for example, combined with John Purling,[84] one of Colebrooke's most prominent supporters and Deputy Chairman in 1771, to obtain the Fort Majorship of Madras for Orme's protégé Arthur Owen.[85] Moreover, Orme's great friend John Roberts, a member of the Court of Directors from 1769-1772, rose to become first Deputy Chairman in 1775 and then Chairman the following year.[86] With Roberts in charge Orme had little difficulty in implementing his wishes. In 1775, for instance, Roberts had Bob Orme-Smith placed second on the List of Writers, even though the list had been oversubscribed to the tune of 70 applications: " Mr. Roberts in my room put his (Orme-Smith's) name down in his pocket book the very hour I asked and he knew that I had a nephew to ask for." [87] It was a far cry from the days when he had been told that there was no place for William Hosea on the entire list. Orme's new-found standing must have had a lot to do with the recognition accorded to his **History,** which had finally established his reputation in Company circles. As a result, Orme now found himself very highly regarded by everyone there and looked up to as a valued and respected authority on Indian affairs. Notable figures like the Royal Plenipotentiary Sir John Lindsay, who had been appointed to handle all dealings with the Nawab and other native rulers out in India, now held Orme in high regard and paid the greatest respect to his opinions:

> Yet every man that is worth knowing would be flattered in having an opportunity of obliging Mr. Orme and at the same time that I humbly join in the general applause of your inestimable performance. I have I hope benefited by your very judicious remarks.[88]

In India the faction fighting, discord and military setbacks which had characterised the previous decade continued apace. In Madras especially, the growing intensity of the friction was threatening to tear the settlement apart. Things finally came to a head in 1776, when the new Governor Lord Pigot was deposed and imprisoned by a group of his own Councillors. It was a similar story in Bengal, where

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84 Parker, " Directors of the East India Company," pp.210-12.

85 OV. 30, A. Owen - Orme, Jan.31 1773, p.235.

86 Parker, " Directors of the East India Company," pp.219-22.

87 Ov.202, Orme - R. Orme-Smith, Dec.14 1775, p.107.

88 OV.30, Sir John Lindsay - Orme, Sept.1 1770, p.142.

the new Governor Warren Hastings found himself locked in a bitter struggle with the majority of his Councillors. Militarily too, British prestige seemed to have sunk to an all time low. In 1775 war had broken out with the Marathas and the British found themselves forced to make significant concessions. The outbreak of the Second Maratha War in 1778 was to result in even greater ignominy. At Hastings' direction, a British army marched right across central India to Surat, only to find that the Bombay army had been completely surrounded at Wadgaon and forced to capitulate.

Elsewhere too the outlook seemed bleak. In 1775 the American War of Independence had broken out; at first it seemed that everything would be speedily settled in Britain's favour, thereafter though the situation had rapidly deteriorated. In 1777 General Burgoyne's army was surrounded at Saratoga and had been forced to surrender. The peace mission, under Lord Carlisle, which had been sent to negotiate with the American colonists had also broken down. In February 1778, when France entered the war on the side of the Americans, it seemed to signal the beginning of the end.

Thus the second volume of Orme's **History,** was published against a very different background to that in which the first volume had been printed. Volume One celebrated the Treaty of Paris and the end of the Seven Years War, from which Britain had emerged overwhelmingly triumphant. India was then only one in a long line of successes, which included Canada, the West Indies and the Western Pacific. In 1778 however, the situation was very different. From being at the very pinnacle of success, Britain's fortunes had plunged to their lowest ebb. Now it seemed, she stood on the verge of losing an empire.

Orme was deeply conscious of this decline in British power and prestige. Both emotionally and intellectually what appealed to him had been the stirring tale of British military success and achievement. He tried to offset the disasters of the present by harking back to a more glorious era, when British arms had been triumphant everywhere he looked. His narrative thus ended with the fall of Pondicherry in 1761, on a high point of British military success. The final words of Volume Two suggest that he had intended to return to chart events in Bengal: "Colonel Coote embarked on the 13th of March leaving his regiment to follow, and

with him, our narrative returns to the affairs of Bengal".[89] But Orme never returned to the task. In the circumstances he chose to leave off his narrative on a glorious and resounding note, before the tale of British arms in India began to lose its lustre.

89 **History** (1778), vol.2, p.739.

Chapter V

The Oriental Scholar (1780-1801)

By the middle of the 1780s Orme had become quite removed from the mainstream of Indian politics, and now had very little to do with Indian affairs. Now in his mid-fifties, he found little in common with the new generation who had come to power, both at home and in India. In 1785 Laurence Sulivan had died and Warren Hastings had returned home from Bengal. Real power within the Company now lay with men like Pitt the Younger and Henry Dundas; men whom Orme had little if any acquaintance with. In India too, the picture was very much the same. Most of Orme's contemporaries had long since left, and he was nowhere near as well acquainted with the new generation of Company servants. At Madras, although he had some acquaintance with the new Governor Lord Macartney and the Adjutant-General, Colonel Henry Cosby, Charles Floyer was now the only man left whom he still knew well.

This period was also to mark a very significant phase in Orme's scholastic career. It witnessed his transformation from being purely a historian of British India to his establishment as an Oriental scholar. From writing about the British in India, Orme began to turn his attentions to the subject of India itself. Thus the latter years of his life were devoted mostly to Oriental studies and researches. In particular, Orme's attention was focused on the new climate of Indian learning, which Warren Hastings had been promoting since the 1770s. Hastings had been deeply dissatisfied with the state of the British administration in Bengal for a long time. The entire system he felt, was corrupt and tyrannical, and needed to be completely remodelled. Hastings believed that British rule in India, if it was to be effective, had to be based on a knowledge and understanding of India's laws, religions and institutions.[1] The past conditions of Indian politics and government, he felt,

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1 P.J. Marshall, " Warren Hastings as Scholar and Patron", in **Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants**,Eds. J.S. Bromley, A. Whiteman (Oxford, 1973), pp.242-62.

offered important clues to the political and administrative problems of the present. To this end, he had encouraged and subsidised a whole wave of legal and administrative studies. At Hastings' behest Nathaniel Brassey Halhed began his codification of Hindu Law, **A Code of Gentoo Laws,** while Charles Wilkins, for example, was encouraged by him to begin translating the **Bhagavad Gita.** Orme thoroughly approved of Hastings' aims and was full of support for his work. This, he felt, was the end towards which the British in India should be directing their energies:

> I always thought that such a work (The Code of the Gentoos) must be the basis of any reasonable government exercised by us, but always despaired of its execution: knowing to what other views and objects the abilities of Europeans have hitherto been directed in Indostan.[2]

Hasting's influence also made itself felt back home and the trend for Indian studies also caught on in England. Persian scholars like William Davy and Joseph White, for example, began choosing their translations with an eye to the present. In 1783, for instance, they published **The Institutes of Timur** which they hoped, would illustrate the administrative principles under which various nations had been united under the same regime. The same tendency prevailed in the realm of history, where writers looked to the past in order to elucidate the present. The immediate past of contemporary India attracted the attention of historians like Ghulam Hussein Khan, who was encouraged to write his account of the later Mughals, the **Siyar al-Muta'Khirin,** by the Company's servants. This, they hoped, would provide impartial evidence of the true character of the Company's political role in India.

Orme was very much in the midst of this whole movement. Not only did he openly approve of Hastings' work, he was also closely associated with many of the men who were in the vanguard of the movement back in England, such as William Davy and Joseph White. Along with another noted Persian scholar, Charles Boughton Rouse, Davy, who had been Hastings' Persian secretary in Calcutta, was to act as one of Orme's principal sources of information on Mughal history. Since 1780, Orme and Davy together with Joseph White, Professor of Arabic at Oxford, had

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2 OV.202, Orme - W. Hastings, Jan.14 1775, p.48.

been working on a project to publish a translation of the **Iqbal Namah-i-Jahangiri** and the **Akbar Namah.**[3] White's role in this was to provide details of the Persian manuscripts, which were in the holdings of the Ratcliffe library at Oxford:

> I received today the favour of your (White's) letter of the 1st and send off this night of the 3rd and 4th pages you enclosed me to Mr. Davy, desiring him to tell me whether they are done well enough for him to translate from and I will advise you accordingly.[4]

Orme for his part, undertook to handle all the business of publication and distribution:

> In the subscription business I shall venture to trouble you immediately since you have authorised me to so do. Our expectations from the work are I think not very sanguine .... it appears that 500 copies Persian and English .... will cost £125 but as prior estimates generally fall short of the real expense, if we call it £150 we may be nearer the mark now. If we can fill 300 subscriptions, they will pay the expenses of publication.[5]

Despite all their efforts, they were not able to raise the necessary number of subscriptions and the project was shelved. However, this did not put an end to the collaboration between Davy and White, who together embarked on their new project on Timur.

It was in this climate that in 1782 Orme published his last major work, the **Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire.** This charted the rise of Maratha power under Sivaji, and dealt with the reign of Aurangzeb and his attempts to subjugate the Deccan. Orme, as the official Historiographer of the East India Company, would have been only too aware of what was expected of him at such a time. In a period of such direct Company patronage of Indian learning, he too must have felt it incumbent on him to make a contribution. The **Historical Fragments** as such, was his own contribution to the understanding of British India. By

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3 OV.168, Capt. W. Davy - Orme, July 1 1780, p.94.

4 Ibid. Orme - J. White, June 3 1780, p.112.

5 Ibid. Captain W. Davy - Orme, July 1 1780, p.94.

concentrating on the reign of Aurangzeb, Orme felt that he was going to the very heart of the reasons behind the decline of Mughal power in the present day.

The **Fragments** had its origins in a small history which Orme had already written on the "Life of Sivaji",[6] the founder of the Maratha nation. The reverses inflicted on the British by the Marathas during the first Maratha War (1776-1778), had first brought them to the front of Orme's attention. In much the same way as the successes of Clive and Stringer Lawrence in the Carnatic had fired Orme's imagination, so the successes of the Marathas against the Company's troops seems to have inspired Orme to take an interest in their founder Sivaji. Orme's great admiration for Sivaji prompted him to focus much more closely on the reign of Aurangzeb. More and more, this led him to conclude that the rise of the Marathas was inseparable from the decline of the Mughal authority, and that it was in Aurangzeb's reign that the key lay. It was, he felt, the reign of Aurangzeb which provided the essential background for understanding the events of the eighteenth century, and with it the rise of British power:

> The knowledge is well worth the enquiry; for .... there are no States or Powers on the Continent of India, with whom our nation have either connection or concern, who do not owe the origin of their present condition to the reign of Aurangzebe, or to its influence on the reigns of his successors.[7]

It was also about this time that Orme began seriously to develop his interest in Indian geography. Over the years Orme's contacts out in India had enabled him to amass an enormous amount of geographical material. Some of this had been published in the maps which had accompanied the two volumes of his **History.** A memorandum submitted by Orme to the East India Company suggests that the great mass however, still remained unused:

> Mr, Orme is in possession of several geographical tracts relating to India, which contain curious knowledge and may on occasion, be useful abroad. If a collection of them were printed, they would lead

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6 OV.298(b), pp.1-22.

7 **Fragments**, p.165.

> to farther knowledge, and if accompanied with accurate indexes, would become the means of facilitating a more general comprehension of the countries and routes of which they treat, than can be obtained without tedious difficulty.[8]

Clearly Orme was well aware of the importance of his collection, and the potential it offered to make a substantial contribution to the understanding of India's geography. As such, he intended to use it to make a "General Map" of India himself, which would accompany and illustrate his **Historical Fragments:** "To explain this portion of history, by far the most curious and perhaps not least interesting, which Mr. Orme has hitherto attempted, a General Map of Indostan is necessary."[9]

The Surveyor General, Major James Rennell,[10] who had recently returned from Bengal had also embarked on a similar project. In 1780 he had published a study of Bengal, the **Bengal Atlas,** and had since then been working on a larger scale map of India, which he published in 1782 as a **General Map of All Hindostan**(1782). Orme however, resolutely refused to cooperate with Rennell in any way, and went to great lengths to keep his own materials to himself. This in turn prompted a furious response from Rennell, who complained bitterly to Warren Hastings that Orme was holding his materials for his own selfish purposes, and so completely undermining his project:

> The general map of Hindostan is still at a stand for want of materials. It is a provoking circumstance that the Historian O--e keeps up all the Geographical materials in order to extract particulars only as serve the purpose of illustrating his History; and probably I may lose my eyesight or drop into the grave, before he has done with them.[11]

In the end, Orme was forced to abandon the project because of the sheer cost of the undertaking; which he could not afford on his own, and which the Company had refused to subsidise.

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8 OV.150, p.101.

9 Ibid. p.104.

10 A.S. Cook, " Major James Rennell and A Bengal Atlas", in **India Office Library and Records Report**(1976), pp.5-43.

11 BL. Add. Mss. 29147, J. Rennell - W. Hastings, Jan.26 1781, f.191.

> What is done is that with names, already stands at £40, and when completed will with the engraving, come to a great deal of money, perhaps £150, too much for Mr. Orme to ask, but much more than any sale can bear.[12]

It was only this factor which caused Orme to relent and persuaded him to allow Rennell access to his materials:

> Mr. Orme is therefore very willing to deliver what's already done to the Company, recommending that Major Rennell, if he can be induced, may complete the map and in such case will assist Major Rennell with all his materials, which he imagines to be a greater collection than any in Europe.[13]

As Rennell knew, Orme's materials were absolutely essential to his project. Without them he would have had severely to limit the scope of his map and restrict it only to Northern India.[14] Orme fully realised this, yet he had no compunction in denying Rennell the access which he needed so desperately. Even though Rennell was a fellow scholar and a long standing acquaintance, who had supplied Orme with many of his early maps of Bengal, Orme saw him as being in direct competition with himself. Gentleman though he was, as a scholar Orme could be utterly selfish and unscrupulous when it came to looking after his own interests.

For Orme, the publication of the **Historical Fragments** represented the logical conclusion to his changing interests over the previous five years. With the help of his friends, he had been able to translate various Persian manuscripts and had studied the history of the Mughals and the Marathas. Present day British India was not a world which Orme recognised any longer or in which he felt very much at home. The distaste which he had developed for the Bengal story, had been hardened by the years of discord, incompetence and military failure which had followed in both Bengal and Madras. This, above all, had ensured that present day British India had become a world which he did not even choose to recognise. In the circumstances,

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12 OV.150, p.104.

13 Ibid.

14 BL. Add. Mss. 29147, J. Rennell - W. Hastings, Jan.26 1781, f.191.

India and her past offered Orme a much more palatable prospect. It did not confront Orme with the harsh realities of what British power had actually become. Instead it allowed him to research and study a field, which although it was removed from the present, seemed almost as important and maybe of even greater long term significance. To this purpose, Orme continued with his search for information about the Mughals[15] and the Marathas.[16] He also took a great interest in the work of his friend William Jones, who had arrived in Calcutta in 1783, where he was beginning to embark on his discovery of Hindu law, literature and mythology.

In 1783 William Jones finally obtained the appointment to the Bengal judiciary, for which he and his friends had campaigned for so long. He left for Bengal with dreams of exploring the art and literature of Asia. Once arrived in Calcutta, he set out on a systematic programme of Indic studies. To aid this, in 1784 he founded the Asiatic Society for the purpose of studying India and its social, political and economic institutions at first hand. With the solitary exception of Charles Wilkins, who had produced an edition of the **Bhagavad Gita** and was hard at work translating the **Mahābhārata,** British interests had until then been concentrated on Persian studies and the Mughal past. Jones however, followed in Wilkins' footsteps and launched himself into a full scale study of Sanskrit. As he grew well versed in Sanskrit, he began to open up a whole new horizon, the hitherto half-hidden world of Hindu India, its laws, its literature and its mythology. He kept Orme closely informed of his progress. "I return you many thanks for the printed pieces which you have been so good by various conveyances to send me", Orme wrote. "I perused them all with curious pleasure. Nothing equal to them will be done in future, when you shall lay your pen down".[17] Jones had recently written a series of poetic hymns to the six Hindu deities, Kama, Narayana, Sarasvati, Ganga, Indra and Surya.[18] They had been published in the first volume of Francis Gladwin's magazine The **Asiatick Miscellany**, and it must have been these works which first introduced Orme to the world of Hindu literature.

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15 OV.202, Orme - W. Jones, March 12 1784, p.189.

16 OV.331, C.W. Malet - Orme, Jan.8 1785, pp.17-24.

17 OV.214, Orme - W. Jones, March 11 1786, p.46.

18 G. Cannon, **Oriental Jones. A Biography of Sir William Jones 1746-1794** (Bombay, 1964), p.132.

Despite the common background which the two men shared, Orme's reaction to this new field of knowledge revealed a fundamental difference in outlook. Both Orme and Jones had been immersed in an eighteenth century classical education, which led them to measure Indian culture by the yardstick of ancient Greece and Rome. Orme, who up till then had had little or no knowledge of Sanskrit and had only the most rudimentary knowledge of Persian, remained firmly grounded in his classical, European heritage. He for his part had few doubts, there could be no comparison between Oriental literature and that of Greece and Rome:

> Notwithstanding the superiority with which these subjects have been treated by yourself, I am convinced that the Indian mythology can never furnish ideas of such fine taste as the genius of the Greeks have improved or invented from theirs. Pallida surgit Tithoni, see the use made by Virgil of the God Cupid and his mother at the end of the first Aenead. What Elegance can exceed such poetry?[19]

The classical legacy was also very important for Jones, and he too shared Orme's view about the perfection of Greek literature. At the same time he was careful to distinguish between Greek and Roman literature. Roman literature, he felt, could not possibly match the originality and creativity of the early Greek authors:

> As to the works of the Greeks I perfectly agree with you, (Orme), and think every line of them to be a gem of exquisite beauty; but I consider the Romans as bright only with borrowed rays, and doubt whether Italy would have produced a poet better than the Fauns and Sylvens, if Greece had not been conquered.[20]

However, Jones's experience of Sanskrit caused him to take a very different path. His Sanskrit studies led him to discover a broad affinity between the Greeks and the Hindus in their mythology, their literary forms and in their systems of thought.[21] The Hindus were for him the Greeks of Asia. Their art and culture were the peculiar expression of their own characteristic genius,[22] and therefore had to be judged

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19 OV.214, Orme - W. Jones, March 11 1786, p.46.

20 Jones, **Letters**, vol.2, p.716.

21 Mukherjee, **Sir William Jones**, pp.96-8.

22 J.S. Grewal, **Muslim Rule in India. The Assessments of British Historians** (Calcutta, 1970), p.53.

according to their own intrinsic merits: "The Hindus and Arabs are perfectly original; and to my taste .... their compositions are sublime and beautiful in a high degree."[23] Jones tried hard to put Orme's dismissal of Hindu literature in perspective, and to persuade him of the importance of judging it on its own merits. The European experience of Sanskrit literature, he pointed out, had been derived purely from translations; as a result it was a very diluted and corrupted one. Even Orme's favourite poet Virgil, he observed, would have suffered from such a comparison:

> ... but your favourite Virgil would make an indifferent appearance in a verbal translation; and the art of his composition can only be known to those, who like you, feel the charm of his original versification.[24]

As an Orientalist, however, Jones was a prodigy and his aesthetic theories were far ahead of his time; it was Orme's ideas perhaps, which were much more typical.

The renewed effort of working on the **Fragments,** coupled with the continuous round of political and financial business took an exacting toll of Orme's health, which began to deteriorate quite sharply in 1781. In an effort to find himself healthier surroundings Orme took a seven year lease on a house in the country, at Colney in Hertfordshire.[25] Although the house itself was a rather simple affair, it had a garden and grounds of about one and a half acres; it was also very cheap. Orme grew very fond of it and was soon spending increasing amounts of his time there, using it to recuperate from a daily round of business, which he was beginning to find increasingly arduous.

Orme's fragile state of health was shattered completely in 1783 by a terrible personal tragedy. In the summer of 1783 news reached England of the loss of The "Grosvenor", on which William Hosea and his family had been returning home. The "Grosvenor" was wrecked off the coast of Africa. Orme, as we know, was very close to his nephew and had been eagerly awaiting his return home. The report of his loss was a terrible blow and had a quite traumatic effect on the aged historian: "My wretched health", he wrote, "has been impaired by the shock, which

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23 Jones, **Letters,** vol.2, p.716.

24 Ibid. pp.716-17.

25 OV.202, April 27 1781, pp.144-5.

for many days left me almost in a state of stupidity."[26] Orme had always been a man who had been deeply attached to his family connections, which he had prized as one of the few constant poles in an unreliable and ever changing world. Thus for him, Hosea's death was a catastrophe of enormous proportions. Now in the twilight of his life, it seemed to rob the years ahead of much of their meaning: "advanced as I am in life, it would have been against the chance of a much longer term of years than I have reached to have been stricken with such a calamity of such horror."[27] Nevertheless, Orme continued hoping against hope that somehow the family might have survived. A rumour of several whites living amongst a tribe of blacks somewhere near the wreck of the "Grosvenor" raised his spirits for a while. However, by March 1784 he had almost given up every hope. There was also the added worry about his nephew's will. Hosea had been survived by three children, two girls and a boy, whom he had left behind in England under Orme's care. There was, however, no record of any will of his in England and Orme had to write frantically to his friends in India, begging them to search for any copy he might have left behind.[28] Not surprisingly, the effects of so much strain and stress proved too much for him and his constitution gave way completely. In December Orme became seriously ill;[29] he was bedridden for most of the winter and remained very weak and debilitated well into the spring of 1784. Indeed it was not until April that he found himself well enough to get out of the house.[30]

1785, however, brought better news. The discovery of Hosea's will[31] relieved Orme of some of the anxieties he had been suffering over the future of his grand nephews and nieces. It named Orme as one of the five executors and entrusted him, amongst other things, with the welfare and upbringing of the children. What was much more important from Orme's point of view was that the will provided for Hosea's parents and his children, and meant that he would not be called upon to

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26 Ibid. Orme - T.J. Metcalfe, Sept.8 1783, p.178.

27 Ibid. p.177.

28 Ibid. Orme - W. Jones, March 12 1784, p.189.

29 Ibid. Orme - J. Ellis, March 10 1784, p.187.

30 Ibid. Orme - W.A. Du Cane, May 5 1784, p.194.

31 PRO, Probate 11(Wills)/1128/192.

shoulder the burden. In the same year, Orme's other nephew, 'Bob' Orme-Smith returned home, having resigned from the Company service on health grounds.[32] This, however, provided Orme with scant consolation. Fond as he was of his errant nephew, Orme had become extremely disillusioned with him, and he fought hard to suppress a growing irritation at Bob's singular lack of progress. After well over a decade in India and despite everything Orme had done for him, Bob had still not succeeded in improving his finances, and Orme found himself called on yet again to help him.

> I may be allowed to think that after I had placed him in a situation so much sought after by persons of condition, and procured by me with such a weight of obligation, he should after 11 years have got so little forward as to require the assistance of his friends, both at home and abroad.[33]

Nevertheless, Orme did his best to help Bob obtain a new, slightly improved position in the Company service, and went wearily about the business of recommending him to everyone he still knew out in India. It was, however, only out of a sense of duty, for he had long since lost all faith in his nephew's abilities.[34]

By now Orme was spending more and more of his time at Colney; but this did little to halt the gradual decline in his health. In March 1786 Orme was again taken ill, this time with complete exhaustion coupled with an attack of bilious fever.[35] He was confined to his bed chamber for almost a month and remained a sick man throughout the summer, most of which he had to spend indoors.[36] For the sake of his health Orme finally decided to leave London. In 1793 he retired to Ealing, where he was to live for the rest of his life. Ealing at the time was little more than a small country village, surrounded by pastures, meadows and farmland.[37] Here Orme was to live quietly and more or less contentedly in retirement. He found the fresh country

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32 **Fort William - India House Correspondence vol.9 1782-5**, Ed. B.A. Saletore (New Delhi, 1959), p.541.

33 OV.214, Orme - General G. Stibbert, March 11 1786, p.49.

34 Ibid. pp.49-50.

35 Ibid. Orme - J. Hankey, April 24 1786, p.59.

36 Ibid. Orme - W.A. Du Cane, Sept.30 1786, p.82.

37 D. Lysons, **The Environs of London** (1795), vol.2, p.234.

air very much easier on his constitution and revelled in it, going for long rides almost every other day. "The weather here is delicious;" he told Richard Smith, "and I regret every hour that you cannot breath it with me. I was on horseback yesterday evening two hours and a half, and earnestly wish you could do so too."[38] The whole atmosphere had a soothing, restful effect on Orme, and he found himself sleeping better than he had done for many years. He found he did not miss the bustle of Harley Street at all, and was quite happy to spend his time quietly reading or writing letters: "I find very pleasant companions in my study (my books,) to whom I can communicate my ideas with as much confidence as I do to you."[39] Although he did not go out a great deal, Orme was not forgotten and he continued to be visited often by old friends such as Richard Smith, John Roberts and Alexander Dalrymple.[40] He was also regularly visited by many of his friends from outside the world of East Indian affairs, men like Sir George Baker,[41] one of the most eminent physicians of his day, and the young astronomer and physicist Mark Beaufoy.[42]

Orme's later years were spent anxiously contemplating the course of the French Revolution. "When not employed on the necessary duties to myself and friends" he wrote, "much of my time is employed contemplating the present Revolution in France."[43] The outbreak of the Revolution had taken him completely by surprise and Orme was staggered by the turn of events, "of which no events in the preceding history of that country could have suggested."[44] What evidence we have suggests that Orme, along with many of his countrymen, had initially been very sympathetic to what was happening in France. Indeed as an old Wilkesite, he must have welcomed the Declaration of the Rights of Man. However, along with Wilkes and many others, Orme was appalled and horrified by the way in which what had begun so promisingly with the Declaration, had degenerated into the mass executions

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38 **Fragments**, p.xlviii.

39 Ibid. xlix.

40 Ibid. p.l.

41 **DNB**, vol.1 pp.927-8.

42 Ibid. vol.2, pp.51-2.

43 **Fragments**, p.xlviii.

44 Ibid.

of the Terror and the execution of Louis XVI. Despite lifelong adherence to his values of Republican virtue, when confronted with the real thing Orme reacted like any other conservative-minded Englishman. He regarded the Revolution with fear and apprehension, speaking with horror of the "extraordinary change or apparent change, in the national character, from such frivolity to atrocious barbarity."[45] In tones which were very similar to the ringing denunciations made by Edmund Burke, in his **Reflections on the Revolution in France** (1790) Orme concluded, "It is a great misfortune, that they are now civilised savages." [46]

In April 1796 Orme finally sold his house in Harley Street.[47] Contrary to the rosy picture painted by the writer of his memoir, Orme was also starting to go blind.[48] It was for this reason that he was forced to part with his beloved library and he consigned it for auction at Leigh and Sotheby.[49] The auction itself lasted for 10 days and raised the very considerable sum of £1,179 16s. 6d. Orme was very conscious that his health was beginning to fade fast and a year later he made his will.[50] The principal beneficiary of this was a Mrs Mary Dixon who, it emerges was Orme's living companion. Indeed it is quite possible that she may have been the "wife" about whom so little was known. To Mary Dixon, Orme bequeathed almost all his possessions, household goods, furniture, plate, silver, all his clothing and remaining books, his horses and his carriage. Through the sale of his assets, she was also to receive a further £1,000. John Roberts, who along with Mary Dixon had been appointed as the other executor, was also left a legacy of £1,000. It was to his great friend that Orme also entrusted the care of all his manuscripts, maps, charts and other papers. Whatever was left from the sale of his assets, a sum which Orme expected to be in the region of £500, was put aside for the education and maintenance of his grand-nephew, Robert Orme-Smith junior. All the amounts involved are fairly small and it is all too clear that Orme's latter years had not seen any sizeable improvements in his fortunes. Nevertheless, the references to his horses

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45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid. p.l.

48 **Gentlemans Magazine**, vol.71 (1801), p.90.

49 BM Sale Catalogue, S-C.S. 28(10), April 25 1776.

50 PRO, Probate 11(Wills)/1356.

and his carriage suggests, that with the consequent reduction in his expenses, that Orme's move to Ealing enabled him to live his last years in some degree of comfort. No mention is made anywhere else in the will of any other property. This suggests that the Harley Street house was, infact, the only property which Orme ever owned, and that the Ealing house, for reasons of economy, had probably been taken on a lease.

Towards the beginning of January 1801, Orme fell ill for the last time. He quickly became so weak and debilitated that it was clear that he did not have long to live. He died soon after, on the 13th January, aged 73.[51] Orme was buried at St. Mary's, the Parish Church of Ealing, near the wall of the North aisle. His long standing friend, John Roberts, erected a cenotaph to his memory; a circular marble tablet inscribed with a curled serpent, the symbol of eternity.[52] Another long standing intimate, Richard Smith, his friend for over 35 years, composed this epitaph:

> Sacred to the Memory of Robert Orme,
> A Man endeared to his Friends
> By the Gentleness of his Manner
> And Respected by the Public
> As the elegant Historian of the Military Transactions
> Of the British Nation in India.[53]

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51 **Fragments**, p.L.

52 T. Faulkner, **The History and Antiquities of Brentford, Ealing and Chiswick** (1845), p.190.

53 Ibid.

PART II. LIFE AND WORKS.

Chapter VI

Orme and Robert Clive.
The Waxing and Waning of a Friendship

Orme's friendship with Robert Clive, the founder of the British Empire in India, is well worth a separate study. Not only does it add a new dimension to our understanding of Orme, it also sheds a great deal of light on the origins of his work. For two decades Orme was closely associated with one of the greatest figures in the history of British India; indeed, during the 1750's he was to play a decisive role in some of the most crucial moments of Clive's career. Their friendship lasted almost 20 years and, as we will see, was to have a far reaching effect on the lives of both men. For Orme especially, it was of great significance and it exercised a great influence over the progress of his life's work, the **History.** Indeed, the rise and fall of their friendship is to a great extent, mirrored in the development of the **History.**

Clive first met Orme in 1750 in Bengal, where he had been sent to recuperate after a bad attack of fever. The two men took to each other almost immediately and by the end of the year they had become close friends. On the face of it, this friendship between Orme, the bookworm and intellectual, and Clive, the legendary man of action, was an unlikely one. However, they had much more in common than first met the eye. To begin with, they were almost the same age. When they first met, Clive was 25, while Orme was 22. Not only were they contemporaries, they also shared a similar background and education. Both men came from solid middle class backgrounds, although Clive's family, as small country squires, may have been rather more genteel than Orme's. Both Alexander Orme and Clive's father, Richard Clive, were men of limited means, who found themselves forced to turn to the professions to maintain their position. Richard Clive became a lawyer to eke out his meagre rents, while Alexander Orme sought employment out in India. Like Orme, Clive too was educated first at a public school, in this case

Merchant Taylor's, and then sent on to a cramming establishment, where he was prepared for a commercial career. Sent out to India at an early age, both Clive and Orme were clearly men of a type, trained from an early age for a mercantile career abroad.

Together the two men formed a trading partnership to carry on trade between Bengal and the Coromandel Coast.[1] Clive handled things at the Madras end,[2] while Orme, based at Calcutta, looked after affairs in Bengal. It was a relatively small scale concern, dealing in local commodities such as rice,[3] textiles[4] and conchshells,[5] which were shuttled up and down the coast between Madras and Calcutta. It was to last for almost three years, right up to the time of their joint departure for England in 1753. During this time, the relationship between the two men was extremely close. Both financially and personally, Orme had Clive's complete confidence. Within the partnership Orme was allowed almost complete freedom to represent their joint interests, wherever he was. This level of trust was not confined purely to the world of business and Orme found himself acting on Clive's behalf almost everywhere he went. For example, during his stay in Madras, it was to Orme that the Council advanced Clive's expenses for his famous expedition to Arcot.[6] Orme, it is clear, was so closely identified with Clive that even so weighty a matter was left completely in his care.

The struggle which ensued between the English and the French for the control of the Carnatic gave Clive the opportunity he had been waiting for to make his name. Within a short time he had succeeded in covering himself with glory; first by the daring capture and defence of Arcot in 1751, and then by his victory at the battle of Kaveripak, the following year. By the time the battle for the Carnatic had ended, Clive was widely acknowledged as one of the principal architects behind the

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1 Mss. Eur. G 37, Box 20, June 24 1751.

2 Ibid, Box 1, Dec. 24 1750.

3 Ibid, Box 19, Accounts, Feb. 4 1751.

4 Ibid, Box 20, J. Brown - Clive, Feb.27 1752

5 Ibid, Box 19, Accounts, Feb.4 1751.

6 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book (Public Department) 1751**, Ed. B.S. Baliga, (Madras, 1938), p.106.

English victory. Clive's exploits made a deep impression on the unmilitary Orme, who was full of admiration for his friend:

> I have the happiness of a very intimate friendship with Captain Clive and though not biased by that, can venture to say that a braver spirit or a warmer zeal never exerted itself in an English cause.[7]

Clive appeared as very much a hero in the eyes of his admiring friend, who began to entertain an almost boundless faith in his military abilities. Writing some time after the siege of Arcot he declared to a friend:

> ... Captain Clive is here, 150 men arrived a few days ago from Bengal and this military genius is too well known to us and too much dreaded by the enemy, not to let us expect that if he goes to Trichinopoly, matters must be concluded immediately .[8]

It was also about this time, in 1752, that Orme first started work on his history of the Carnatic War. Thus it is in the warm glow of this deep and admiring friendship that we can see the first germs of Orme's **History.**

By the end of 1752 both men had determined on returning to England. Orme wrapped up his affairs in Bengal and travelled down to Madras, intending to sail for home with Clive. On the 17th of March 1753 Orme, together with Clive and his new wife Margaret, sailed for England. During the six months long journey Orme spent much of his time working on his narrative with Clive, and by the end of the voyage, he had almost entirely rewritten his **History.** Thus it seems that the draft which Orme brought back to England with him was the product of a very close collaboration between the two men.

Neither Clive nor Orme was to stay very long in England. Both men arrived home more or less as outsiders to the English political and social scene with every intention of using their stay to promote their reputations and further their careers back in India. While Orme spent most of his time using the draft of his **History** to impress all and sundry, Clive too was capitalising on his fame as the hero of Arcot. However, he was content to play the part of the unassuming soldier, and

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7 India II, Orme - S. Law, Feb.18 1752, p.499.

8 Ibid.

was more inclined to let the others do the promoting. In this context, Orme and his account of Clive's doings in the draft of his **History,** must have had a considerable part to play. It is during this period, that we can detect the origins of the jealousy and sense of rivalry, which was to flare up in Orme later. Though the best of friends, both Orme and Clive were ambitious young men, plucking at the early plums of promotion, and now jockeying each other for position. They found themselves both competing for the same position, the Governorship of Madras. Clive, in fact, had been aspiring to be Governor even before his return to India; while Orme too had had his eyes on the post from an early date.

By the time he had returned to India, Orme had begun to regard his friend in a very different light. Increasingly, he began to see Clive as a rival, and he became more and more apprehensive over the prospect of his return to India. In this he was not alone; for there was already a considerable ground-swell of dislike and jealousy of Clive at Madras. Henry Speke, the Captain of Admiral Watson's flagship, must have echoed a certain body of opinion when he wrote to Orme in 1755:

> I have a great deal about the Hero, (who will lose his election), which I will show you when we meet to make you laugh. I think you need not entertain any fears of his rivalship - his reputation dwindles very fast.[9]

Speke, in fact, had yet to meet Clive, and it is more than likely that his views would have been coloured by Orme himself, who, as we know, was not above slandering his friends when the need arose. In these circumstances, when he did eventually hear of Clive's return, the news filled him with deep gloom. Clive's appointment as Second in Council and successor to the Governorship represented an even more unprecedented promotion than his own, and must have only served to further intensify his resentment. Clive, however, although he was very much aware of his friend's shortcomings, still retained a great affection and respect for Orme; "for my part, in spite of all his oddities I shall always esteem him [10] ", he wrote. Although he acknowledged that Orme could be arrogant and difficult to deal with, he still

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9 OV.289, H. Speke - Orme, June 9 1755, p.79

10 Mss. Eur. G37, Box 3, Clive - G. Pigot (Undated).

remained firmly convinced of his abilities: "Orme is proud and overbearing and must be kept at a distance, at the same time his capacity may, with a little management be made serviceable to the Company."[11]

The fall of Calcutta in 1756 presented the British in India with the greatest challenge they had yet faced. There were three possible courses of action open to the Council at Madras.[12] The first was to continue with the expedition they had been organising, against the French backed Nizam of the Deccan, Salabat Jang. The second was to send only a small force, to reinforce the small body of 200 troops, which had already been dispatched under Major Kilpatrick. The third option which was open to them, was to assemble and dispatch the largest force that could possibly be spared. Orme, for his part, had always been convinced of the vital importance of Bengal to the British, and had for a long time favoured a tougher policy towards its rulers. As early as 1752, he had voiced the need for a firmer line of action in Bengal, where the old Nawab, Alivardi Khan, was bullying the English settlement for larger and larger sums of money.

> Clive, it would be a good deed to swing the old Dog: I don't speak at random when I say the Company must think seriously of it , or it will not be worth their while to trade in Bengal.[13]

Thus it was Orme who now spoke out on the supreme need to recover Calcutta, and urged a much tougher policy towards Alivardi's grandson, Siraj-ud-Daula.

Orme emphasised to his fellows on the Council, that a small expedition would only weaken Madras, without necessarily improving the position of the British in Bengal. Merely retaking Calcutta he argued, was not enough:

> The violence of his (the Nawab's) temper in Mr Watt's letter leaves little room to hope that the bare retaking of Calcutta will induce him to re-establish the English on terms necessary for the Company, I think they will only inflame him more against them.[14]

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11 Ibid.

12 H.H. Dodwell, **Dupleix and Clive. The Beginning of Empire.** (1920), p.123.

13 OV. 19, Orme - Clive, Aug.25 1752, p.2.

14 OV. 28, "Idea of a Bengal Expedition", p.117.

The best hope that the English had, insisted Orme, was to send an expeditionary force, which would be large enough to cow the Nawab into negotiating, and would induce him to make real concessions. "The only means in my opinion of bringing the Nawab to terms is by immediately making such preparation as will induce him to treat on a footing beneficial to us."[15] For this purpose, he urged that a combined naval and military expedition should be dispatched, with at least 400 European soldiers, under the command of Colonel Clive, as he now was.[16]

Orme's arguments carried a great deal of weight; and after six weeks of wrangling, it was decided to concentrate on recovering Calcutta, even though it meant denuding Madras of all troops.[17] There was some initial opposition to Clive's appointment; and for a time it looked like the command would go to Colonel John Adlercron, the commander of the King's Regiment at Madras. In the protracted argument which ensued, Orme aligned himself with Pigot and Clive, and together they managed to triumph over the opposing faction.[18] Before Clive could sail, there was deadlock once again; this time over the relationship between the expedition and the discredited Bengal Council, whose envoy, Charles Manningham, insisted that they should be given the overall authority.[19] Orme, who had been co-operating closely with Clive throughout the whole proceedings, once again came to the rescue with his forceful and eloquent reasoning. On his friend's behalf, he launched into a strong counter-attack on the Bengal Council.[20] He began very effectively by undermining Manningham's efforts to exonerate the Bengal men of their responsibility for the loss of Calcutta. In doing so, he implicitly associated them with the disaster, and raised a grave question mark over their competence. Then he turned to attack the validity of the authority, which had been claimed for the Bengal Council, by its representative. In the final analysis, Orme emphasised, it was they in Madras who were taking the risks and putting up the money. The Directors back in London were the only body,

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15 Ibid.

16 Ibid. p.118.

17 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book (Public Department) 1756**, Ed. B.S. Baliga, (Madras, 1943), p.238.

18 OV. 28, Orme - J. Payne, Nov.3 1756, pp.58-60.

19 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book (Military Department) 1756**, Ed. H.H. Doswell, (Madras, 1913), pp.309-10.

20 Ibid. pp.311-12.

who had the power to pronounce on the case of authority; until they had done so, Orme implied, the Bengal men should be content to leave those who were taking the risks to worry about them. Once again, Orme's arguments carried the day, and it was decided that the expedition should remain a Madras undertaking. Having triumphed on this point, Orme and Clive worked together to try and secure the direction of the expedition from any further interference from Fort William.[21] Here again it was Orme who argued the case. He persuaded the rest of the Council to agree that while Clive should co-operate and co-ordinate his actions with the Fort William Council, in the last resort he should also have the power to disregard their advice as he saw fit.[22]

In the final analysis, it was the weight of Orme's reasoning which had carried the day. Almost singlehandedly his arguments had been responsible for focusing the attention of the Madras Council firmly on Bengal. Although Clive and Orme had acted together for more or less the entire period leading up to the departure of the expedition, it was Orme who had argued his case for him. Orme's arguments played a vital part in obtaining the command of the Bengal expedition for Clive. By rebutting the claims of the Bengal Council, Orme also secured for his friend the supreme and independent control which was to prove so vital to the success of his undertaking. Without his assistance it is highly unlikely that Clive would have been given the freedom or the powers, which enabled him to stamp his authority in Bengal. Whatever jealousy he may have felt, there is no denying that Orme's commitment to Clive's cause at this stage was enormous. He was motivated in part by a tremendous faith in his friend's abilities, which left him in no doubt as to his capacity for the task ahead.

> Did I not think that Clive's military genius renders him the capablest person in India for an undertaking of this nature ..... I should not entertain the hopes of success which I now do from this expedition

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21 Ibid. pp.312-13.

22 Ibid.

> and not entertaining these hopes of success I had never been so sanguine in the promoting of it.[23]

It also greatly suited Orme's own ambitions to have Clive out of the way. For if Clive were to stay in Bengal it would leave the way clear for him to become Governor of Madras.

The expedition sailed on 16th October 1756. It included a squadron of five Royal ships and as many transports, carrying some 600 European troops and 900 Sepoys. Orme's faith proved to be justified. By the beginning of 1757 Calcutta had been recaptured and the Nawab had been forced to negotiate. In February 1757 Siraj-ud-Daula signed a treaty, promising compensation and granting the English all the rights and privileges they had enjoyed in the past. Clive further secured the English position by destroying the French settlement at Chandernagore. As far as Orme and the rest of the Council were concerned, that should have been the end of the matter. Clive having brought the Nawab to heel and neutralised the French, should now have returned to Madras with his troops where they were sorely needed. The arrival of French reinforcements in September 1756 had totally changed the balance of power in the south. From 1757 onwards, the English position in Southern India started to deteriorate as the French began steadily whittling away at their positions. By now the Madras Council was seriously alarmed, and increasingly urgent letters were written to Clive begging him to return. Clive, however, ignored these requests and elected to stay in Bengal. By the summer of 1757 he had hatched a new conspiracy against the Nawab, and on June 23rd he won his great victory at Plassey. Even after Plassey, however, he still refused to send any of his troops back to Madras.

Orme, like the rest of the Council, was completely confounded and disillusioned by Clive's behaviour. He felt that Clive, carried away by his love of fighting and plunder, had completely "lost his reason on this occasion."[24] As the English position in the South gradually worsened, he began more and more to blame it on Clive.

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23 OV. 28, Orme - Payne, Nov.3 1756, pp.63-4.

24 Ibid, July 6 1757, p.182.

> Colonel Clive saw six ships leave the River Ganges after Chandernagore was taken and did not return us a single man. This the French were no sooner acquainted with, but they took the field and possessed themselves of several parts of the country.[25]

As a Company servant, he was also acutely conscious of the enormous financial losses resulting from Clive's retention of the Madras troops. At the very least, he estimated that Clive's delay had already cost the Company four lakhs in expenses and lost revenues. More and more, Orme began to feel that Clive was incapable of acting in the general interest, and that he was quite unfit for any sort of major responsibility.

> Pardon the freedom of my language, but by appointing such a man to the succession you put yourselves in the situation of the Old woman of Syracuse, who could not bring herself to wish one Dionysus removed, lest a worse as she had experienced should succeed.[26]

Both as a friend and a Company servant Orme had begun to lose his faith in Clive. Indeed, given the extent of Orme's commitment to Clive's cause he had every right to feel personally let down. He also had every right to believe that Clive had failed in his duty as a Company servant and had let down his employers. The protests of the Bengal Council, who described Clive's command as quite unprecedented, made it clear what an extraordinary decision the Madras men had taken. The Madras Council had committed the best part of its troops and armament to the Bengal expedition. In doing so they had vested an unusual amount of trust and authority in its leader. It was a brave decision and a risky one, especially in view of the imminence of war with France. It was the need to keep the troops under their own control, in the event of it being necessary to recall them, that had prompted them to put their trust in Clive. In refusing to return, Clive had not only gone back on his duty, he had also made a mockery of the entire purpose behind the expedition.

Clive, for his part, seems to have been quite unaware of his friend's disapproval. For Orme, true to form, had kept his criticisms hidden from Clive, and voiced them only behind his back. Although he was aware of his friends vaulting

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25 OV.17, Orme - Holdenesse, July 30 1757.

26 OV.28, Orme - Payne, July 6 1757, p.187.

ambitions, Clive's attitude remained as indulgent as ever. Thus he made every effort to reassure Orme that far from being a cross to his aspirations, he intended to assist and support him in every possible way.[27] Clive, in fact, was beginning to move out of Orme's orbit. Although Orme may have been competing with Clive, Clive it is clear, was no longer competing with Orme, for he was already aspiring to a much higher level. As early as 1757, when Orme was scheming for the Governorship, Clive was already aiming to be Governor General of all India. Writing to his father and friends back in England, Clive increasingly had begun to envisage himself in the role of a supreme authority, presiding over all three settlements.

By the end of the decade, there were signs that the relationship between the two men was no longer quite as close as it had been. Orme by 1760 had begun to feel himself slighted and rather forgotten. He resented the large gifts of money, which Clive had made to his old adversary George Pigot, whilst he, who had done so much for Clive, had received next to nothing.[28] Clive, he felt, was guilty of base ingratitude. This in itself was highly significant. Clive, always a generous man, was particularly renowned for his generosity towards his friends. It is a sign perhaps, that even Clive's great affection for his difficult friend was starting to wear a little thin.

The two men were also coming to hold very different sets of attitudes. In his attitude to Clive, Orme had always regarded him as a soldier first and foremost. The Clive who emerges from the first volume of the **History** is an obedient and dutiful soldier-cum-Company servant. Clive, however, was becoming increasingly political in his outlook and his ambitions. The conquest of Bengal called for much more than the straight forward soldierly qualities required during the Arcot campaign. It made Clive conscious of a very much broader set of responsibilities; the very different and much more demanding duties of politics and government. Orme however, had no experience of the great upheaval which had occurred in the aftermath of Plassey. He remained, as a result, relatively blind to the enormous scale of the British victory in Bengal. In contrast to Clive, Orme remained very much an old-fashioned Madras servant. He failed to see Clive's refusal to return from Bengal

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27 OV.293, Clive - Orme, Dated Aug.1 to Oct.18 1757, pp.5-6.

28 Mss. Eur. F.128/13, J. Carnac - Clive, June 15 1760, f.3.

from the larger point of view; and continued to view it only through the financial and territorial losses which his delay had cost the Madras Presidency. Even though Orme himself had not changed, Clive definitely had. Hence, the Clive who returned home from Bengal in 1760 was now a very different figure from the man whom Orme had known in their Madras days.

Both Orme and Clive returned to England at about the same time, in the summer of 1760. However, it was a very different homecoming to that of seven years ago. Then they had been young men, both in very similar circumstances and both pursuing more or less the same goals. This time they arrived home in very different circumstances and henceforth their relations were to be conducted on a very different footing. Clive had returned home an enormously wealthy man, with a great reputation and powerful connections. Orme in contrast, had arrived home a comparatively insignificant figure, lacking in both influence and resources, and with a cloud over his name. Whereas Orme had no option but to devote himself to his studies, Clive's ambitions now centred on national politics, and he aimed to be a power on the English scene.[29] Whilst Clive may indeed have been indebted to Orme for his support in the past, in the future it was to be Orme who would be dependent on Clive. He was now very much the client, and his old friend Clive the patron.

Although Orme continued to see a great deal of Clive, who continued to seek him out, he no longer formed part of Clive's immediate entourage. It was now John Walsh,[30] another Company servant, whom Clive entrusted with his domestic affairs, and who eventually became his Private Secretary. Politically too, Orme was nowhere nearly as important to Clive as he had been in the past. Indeed, Orme was neither rich or powerful enough to be of much use to him. Nevertheless he continued to be closely associated with Clive's interests, and campaigned actively on his behalf at East India House. However, Orme's chief value was as a man of letters and in this role he was to prove of great use to Clive, in his efforts to promote the importance of East India matters in England. By doing so, Clive hoped to

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29 C.H. Philips, " Clive in the English Political World, 1761 - 64." **S.O.A.S. Bulletin**, vol.12,1948, pp.695-702.

30 Love, **Vestiges of Old Madras**, vol.2, pp.320-1.

enhance his own importance in national politics; Orme's expertise provided him with yet another potent weapon with which to further his ambitions. This goes a long way towards explaining Clive's continued interest in Orme's **History.** Clearly Clive saw it as another vehicle for himself, which would have the effect of glorifying his achievements and further boosting his profile.

From the very beginning Clive had taken a great interest in the progress of the **History** and had, in fact, played a considerable role in its production. He supplied Orme with a great amount of his materials and had gone to great lengths to try and obtain fresh sources for him. It was to Clive that Orme frequently directed his requests for information; Clive in his turn, pressed many of his friends and acquaintances into collecting information on Orme's behalf.[31] In this respect his assistance proved quite crucial, it was Clive, for example, who persuaded John Dalton to turn over to Orme the diary, which he had been keeping on the events of the Carnatic War.[32] Dalton's material was to prove of the greatest importance; and indeed without Clive's influence there was every chance that it might not have come Orme's way. Orme in his turn kept Clive closely informed of his progress; and together, the historian and the man of action, often found themselves discussing the various problems arising from the work.[33] Orme was also in the habit of frequently submitting drafts of his work to Clive for his approval.[34] As a result, he often found himself expected to supervise and even revise large portions of Orme's work.[35]

Clive saw the **History** very much as a history of himself and his own achievements. Writing to Orme in 1765, for example, he suggested that the final volume should end with an account of his achievements in his second term as Governor,[36] such as his humbling of the Nawab of Oudh, his reinstatement of the Mughal Emperor to something like his former grandeur and his restoration of order to Bengal. Orme for his part, frequently referred to himself as writing a history of

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31 OV. 30, J. Call - Orme, April 3 1766, p.65.

32 India III, J. Dalton - Clive, Nov.25 1762, p.595.

33 OV. 222, Orme - Clive, Nov.21 1764, p.114.

34 Ibid. April 27 1765, p.118.

35 OV. 293, Orme - Clive, May 8 1758, p.37.

36 OV. 43, Clive - Orme, Sept.29 1765.

Clive. Above all, he was very conscious that he had made Clive the hero of his piece and had highlighted his role to the greatest possible effect.[37] Clive thus had almost a vested interest in the **History.** He was constantly pressing Orme to complete it and grew increasingly impatient the more he delayed:

> I cannot help thinking but Orme acts a very shuffling disingenuous part; how often he has fixed upon a time for publishing his History and how often deceived us - I wish you would speak a little harshly to him upon the subject, and tell him my sentiments of his conduct.[38]

Since Clive's departure for England the situation in Bengal had been deteriorating rapidly. By 1764 the government there seemed on the verge of a complete breakdown, and it became widely known in England, that Bengal was once again the scene of bloodshed and confusion. There was panic in England and the Company's stock fell sharply. Clive appeared to be the only man who could remedy the situation, and there was a general call for his return to Bengal. Orme too, was all in favour of Clive's return. Like many of his contemporaries, he thought Clive was the best man for such a critical situation: "Never was a time in which so much unanimity and concurrence for the public good was so necessary as at present."[39] Nevertheless his was not an unqualified vote of approval. Although Orme still retained the greatest respect for his friend's abilities, his respect was now tempered with considerable misgivings. For, whatever Clive's abilities, bitter experience had taught Orme that he was no longer wholly reliable. Despite Clive's decisiveness, his determination and his energy, Orme felt that his character also suffered from an essential lack of " ... regularity and economy."[40]

The Bengal to which Clive returned in 1764 was widely perceived as a cesspool of greed, corruption and faction. During his second administration Clive devoted all his energies to reforming the military and civil administration of the province. He brought the Company's servants firmly under his control and pacified

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37 Mss. Eur. F128/13, J. Carnac - Clive, June 15 1760, f.3.

38 Mss. Eur. D546/5, Clive - J. Walsh, Sept.4 1763, f.91.

39 OV. 222, Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1766, p.121.

40 OV. 134, p.122.

the neighbouring native powers by negotiating a firm agreement with them. Orme saw him as a man who was fighting desperately to restore order and decency to the settlement, and struggling nobly to preserve the vast revenues of Bengal for the benefit of the Company.[41] At first he was full of approval for his work; Clive's conduct in Bengal, he assured him, was bound to have the support of all unbiased observers.[42] Orme in fact, was full of support for Clive's efforts during the early years of his administration and he worked actively on his behalf. In order to further Clive's Indian policies in Parliament Orme entered into an arrangement with the prime minister Lord Rockingham, Burke's patron.[43] He also cooperated closely with Clive's henchmen, John Walsh and Luke Scrafton and together with them, negotiated with the Directors on Clive's behalf.[44]

It is clear that, whatever private feelings of rejection or disillusionment Orme may have harboured, by themselves they were not enough to precipitate an open break with Clive. Even after Clive's return from India in 1767 Orme continued to see a great deal of him. Within days of Clive's arrival back in England Orme was with him almost constantly.

> He arrived in London the next day. I have been every day since with him during the few minutes he can spare to my interrogatories which are as innumerable as his anecdotes.[45]

Much of the last half of 1767 was also spent working busily on Clive's behalf. Thus for most of the autumn Orme was engaged in property transactions,[46] as he tried to help Clive obtain political control of the land surrounding his country seat at Walcott, in Shropshire. It was an important task, one very dear to Clive's political ambitions, and it is significant that Orme was entrusted with it.

What really caused the final breach between the two men was the quarrel between Clive and Orme's best friend, Richard Smith. The ramifications of

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41 OV. 43, Clive - Orme, Feb.5 1766, pp.45-7.

42 OV. 222, Orme - Clive, Nov.21 1766, p.142.

43 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1766, p.122.

44 Mss. Eur. G 37, Box 40, J. Walsh - Clive, May 16 1766.

45 OV. 222, Orme - T. Anson, July 20 1767, p.161.

46 Mss. Eur. G.37, Box 47, W. Waring - Orme, Sept.1 1767. Mss. Eur. G.37, Box 50, W. Waring - Orme, Dec.17 1767.

the quarrel greatly affected Orme and, as we will see, eventually forced him to take sides. As we have seen, the gap between Orme and Clive had been widening since their Madras days. Despite all his efforts on Clive's behalf, Orme, we know, was no longer part of his innermost circle. The knowledge left him feeling increasingly neglected and occasionally, rather bitter: "I who have nothing to hope for in my life, may be vexed to be neglected by a man to whose fame I have contributed ..."[47] Whereas Clive relied on John Walsh, John Carnac and Luke Scrafton as his closest supporters, it was now Richard Smith whom Orme regarded as his dearest and most trusted friend. In 1764, when Clive embarked once more for Bengal, Smith had travelled out with him as one of his commanders. En route the two men quarrelled violently and did not speak to each other for the rest of the journey. On arriving in India their shipboard antagonism hardened into an ever increasing dislike, and within a short time the two men were at daggers-drawn.[48]

When news of the quarrel first reached England, Orme's first reaction was to advise caution and restraint to his hot-headed friend. Smith's situation, he advised, was all the more precarious because Clive was his superior; so he remained to all intents and purposes still dependent on Clive.[49] There was, however, no stopping Smith. He became more and more convinced of Clive's enmity and grew more and more virulent in his condemnation of him. In his letters back to Orme he directed a torrent of ever-increasing invective at Clive. In his own words, Smith openly set out to convince his friend that many of the impressions he had gained of Clive were utterly false:

> Orme, I have a perfect knowledge of the man and however artfully he has raised a great reputation from his conduct since 1764. He has committed some very explicit errors. His blunders in politics are likely to involve us into a scene of difficulties ..... The negotiations of Lord Clive will be portrayed in lively colours and his conduct stripped

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47 OV. 222, Orme - R. Smith, May 16 1766, p.132.

48 Mss. Eur. D.546/5, Clive - J. Walsh, Dec.1 1765, ff.121-2.

49 OV. 222, Orme - R. Smith, May 16 1766, pp.132-3.

> of all its artificial flattery will then be shown for the world to judge of it from facts.[50]

Beginning in 1767, this stream of criticism was quite all-embracing and it attacked every facet of Clive's character, his abilities and his administration. In the face of this overwhelming tirade it is hardly surprising that Orme first began to lose faith in his old friend and eventually ended up changing his attitudes towards him altogether.

Smith went to great pains to convince Orme of Clive's hostility towards him. He continually emphasised the great difficulties he had to undergo as a result of Clive's dislike and constantly reiterated how unjustly he was being treated. To this effect, he represented his own cause in the most noble and injured light. Clive by contrast, he depicted as a monster of cunning and deceit, treacherously trying to undermine him:

> I have but too good grounds to believe that Lord Clive has been endeavouring to supplant me. My actions were so clear that no attack upon me could be made but his fruitful imagination never wants Resources.[51]

His criticisms of Clive's behaviour in Bengal were just those which would have carried the most weight with Orme, grounded as he was in his old-fashioned notions of civic virtue. He depicted Clive as having a complete stranglehold over every facet of the administration and accused him of being dictatorial and autocratic:

> He assumed to himself the most arbitrary Power; neither Council or Committee dared to oppose him. A Defeat at the Board to his measures would have been sufficient cause for irreconcilable enmity.[52]

He drew with great effect a picture of a tyrannical despot, obsessed with his own authority, and concerned only with implementing his own selfish desires and interests:

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50 OV. 38, R. Smith - Orme, Sept.19 1768, p.137.

51 Ibid. 1767, p.42.

52 Ibid. p.35.

> I know him well. With strict justice it may be said of him as was of Pompey, that in every single action of his life, he has instantly in view his own aggrandizement.[53]

Most of all, Smith's diatribes had the effect of belittling Clive's competence and questioning his abilities as a soldier, as a diplomat and as an administrator. Although Clive was not always personally popular, his abilities were widely acknowledged and Orme, amongst others, had a great faith in them. Smith as we know, was bitterly critical of the administration which Clive had set up in Bengal, and which was now functioning under Henry Verelst. He poured scorn on many of the new measures which Clive had brought in to curb corruption amongst the Company's servants, and openly doubted the competence of the Council which Clive had left behind him.[54] He attributed the Council's incompetence and ignorance of Indian affairs very much to Clive, whose authoritarianism and favouritism he blamed for having undermined its efficiency.[55] He also openly doubted Clive's diplomatic judgement, in particular his generous treatment of the Nawab of Oudh, about which Smith had the deepest misgivings.[56] He even managed to use the various reforms, which were instituted in the Bengal army, as an occasion to call Clive's military abilities into question.

> He knew himself incapable of the executive part of reforming and disciplining an army, and further cause did he have to avail himself of the abilities of all those who had been the distinguished pupils of Lawrence.[57]

Already by the end of 1767 there were signs that the weight of Smith's criticism was beginning to take effect. Clearly the barrage of invective had tarnished Clive's image in the eyes of his friend, for Orme was already beginning to lose faith in him:

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53 Ibid. 1767, p.52.

54 OV. 38, R. Smith - Orme, 1768, pp.72-82.

55 OV. 37, R. Smith - Orme, March 15 1767, p.81.

56 Ibid. Dec.4 1767, p.325.

57 Ibid. Oct.2 1767, p.261.

> Do I foresee, that the parliament will in less than two years ring with declamation against the plunderers of the East..... I do assure you, Old Lawrence has a reputation in England, which may well be envied with all its fortunes by the name of Clive.[58]

During 1768 Orme continued to see a fair amount of Clive. Smith's complaints had by now sunk in quite deeply, and although Orme now had his suspicions, he was not completely sure. By the autumn of 1768 however, Orme no longer had any doubts as to Clive's enmity towards his friend. A conversation with Clive himself fully convinced him of the extent of this hostility.[59] On the 7th of November 1768 Orme spent the day with Clive for the last time. Although he was still trying to conciliate the two, it is clear that Orme had finally made up his mind and decided to take sides.[60] Hence he promised Smith that he would attack Clive vigorously if there was any sign of him moving against Smith at East India House. During 1769 Orme moved further and further away from Clive and his supporters at East India House. By the end of the year he had resolved actively to fight against him and had joined the opposition party, led by Clive's long standing enemy Laurence Sulivan.

Even though Clive's influence over Indian politics was nowhere near as dominant as it had been in the middle of the decade, Orme had come to regard nearly all his actions in an increasingly tyrannical light. He saw many of the recent policy decisions which had been made by the Company ,as signs of the supreme power which Clive was beginning to exercise over Indian affairs.[61] For example, two of Clive's closest supporters, Luke Scrafton and Francis Forde, had just been appointed to the Superintending Commission which was to be sent out to India. The incompetent and inefficient administration of another Clive lieutenant in Bengal, had also gone unnoticed back in England, indeed Verelst's government actually seemed to have earned the approval of the Directors. Richard Smith on the other hand, had been severely censured for having accepted a present from the Mughal Shah Alam, whereas Clive's close friend, John Carnac, had been allowed to receive a similar gift

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58 OV. 222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.18 1767, p.167.

59 OV. 202, Orme - R. Smith, Oct.29 1768, p.1.

60 Ibid. Nov.8 1768, p.13.

61 Ibid. Orme - J. Alexander, Dec.1 1769, p.23.

without the slightest murmur. Orme attributed all these events to Clive's despotic influence which, he confessed, had driven him to join the opposition.[62] As he saw it, Clive's pre-eminence was threatening to suffocate the Company's interests and needed to be challenged:

> In a word if Clive's influence remains, be assured that no man will get at the high or advantageous offices of India, that is not deemed utterly devoted to his maxims and views.[63]

Smith's criticisms had finally taken their toll. As we can see, Orme now stood fully convinced of the damaging and despotic nature of Clive's power. His break with Clive in 1769 was complete, both socially and politically, as Orme announced to Richard Smith in December, "I have not seen Clive's face this twelvemonth."[64]

Orme's disillusionment with Clive was reflected in the different approach which he adopted towards the first and the second volumes of his **History**. The first volume of the **History**, that dealing with the Carnatic War, was published in 1763, long before Orme's friendship with Clive had started to decline. Written at a time when relations between the two men were still fairly close, the first volume marks a high point in Orme's treatment of Clive. Orme at this stage, still very much believed in his friend and was brimming over with enthusiasm and admiration for him. Clive is very much the hero of the piece and his achievements are made the focus of the narrative.

It is quite clear from the way he treats his sources that Orme was determined to paint Clive's role in the most glowing colours possible. Much of the information which he received was then clearly worked on and embroidered to present Clive in the most favourable light possible. Clive's first action was in the hostilities which ensued in India as a result of the War of the Austrian Succession; when the English under Admiral Boscawen, besieged the French capital of Pondicherry in 1748. The source which Orme used to recount this episode, was Clive's own description of what had happened. This itself was a terse and

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62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid. Orme - R. Smith, Dec.2 1769, p.26.

comparatively sparse account of how he and his platoon stood their ground, and fought off a French sally, even after all the other platoons defending the advanced trenches had abandoned their positions and fled.

> Captain Brown who commanded was mortally wounded and his platoon fired and abandoned the trenches as did the platoon belonging to Ensign Grenville so that there remained only one platoon consisting of about 30 men belonging to the Independent Company with Ensign Clive, so that the French Grenadier Company could approach ..... within 10 yards of the trench which they did and fired upon the men in the trenches for about 3-4 minutes when they attempted to force the trenches but were received with such a heavy fire from Ensign Clive's platoon that they immediately went to the right about.[65]

The bare details of this account were then transformed by Orme to present a vivid picture of the daring and cool headed Clive, who even as a young Ensign already showed remarkable powers of leadership and had an astonishing rapport with his troops.

> There now remained only one platoon, of which two or three had been killed and the rest were on the point of running away; when their officer, Ensign Clive reproached them sternly for their pusillanimity, and represented the honour they would gain by defending the trench, after it had been so shamefully abandoned by the rest of the guard. All the company's troops had an affection for this young man, from observing the alacrity and presence of mind which always accompanied him in danger, his platoon, animated by his exhortation, fired again with new courage and great vivacity upon the enemy .... which was so well directed that .... the rest were so terrified by the shock of this extraordinary execution; that they ran back in disorder to the huts.[66]

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65 BL. Additional Mss. 44061, 1762, f.7.

66 History (1763), vol.1, p.106.

Right from the beginning, Clive is presented as an inspiring figure; the image of a born leader who was always able to get the best out of his troops.

Clive's defence of Arcot above all, really dazzled Orme and established him firmly in his mind as a military genius. Orme saw this event in a truly epic light. He represented it as a quite an extraordinary achievement, conducted against seemingly impossible odds, from which Clive emerged in a truly heroic guise.[67] Henceforth he was for Orme the embodiment of the gifted amateur, a born soldier who

> not withstanding he had at this time neither read books, or conversed with men capable of giving him much instruction in the military art; all the resources which he employed in the defence of Arcot, were such as are dictated by the best masters in the science of war.[68]

Thus throughout the rest of the conflict Clive was portrayed as a military prodigy in the mould of a Condé or a Prince Rupert. In Orme's eyes, the young Clive seemed to be the only figure whose abilities were out of the ordinary. Only Clive he felt, had the nerve and the imagination to bring about a rapid improvement in English fortunes.

Thus it is hardly surprising that the entire focus of Orme's narrative seems virtually to revolve around Clive. Orme's admiration and esteem for his friend was so overwhelming that there was hardly room for anyone else. Clive was given the entire credit for almost every action or engagement he was associated with, regardless of the part which may have been played by anyone else. For example, it was Clive who was given all the credit for the Arcot expedition. In Orme's eyes Clive was entirely responsible, not just for the capture and defence of the town, but for all the ideas and planning behind the whole expedition.

> Captain Clive, on his return from Trichinopoly in the beginning of August, represented this situation of affairs to the presidency, and proposed as the only resource, to attack the possessions of Chanda

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67 Ibid. vol.1, p.200.

68 Ibid.

> Sahib in the territory of Arcot; offering to lead the expedition himself.[69]

The idea in fact originated with the Nawab, Muhammad Ali, who had written about it to Thomas Saunders, who was Governor at the time.[70] It was Saunders who was the mastermind behind the expedition and did the greater part of the planning and directing. Clive, in fact, was never fully conscious of the political value of his seizure of Arcot. Both Saunders[71] and George Pigot[72] had to go to great lengths to persuade him not to retire from the town, which they stressed was of the utmost importance. Saunders remained in constant touch with Clive throughout the campaign and as their correspondence reveals, exercised an important guiding influence over him.[73] All of this, however, was more or less ignored by Orme, who hardly mentioned either Muhammad Ali or Saunders at all.

Orme also failed to acknowledge Clive's great debt to the military example and teaching of Stringer Lawrence, the overall commander of the English forces. It was Lawrence in fact, who orchestrated the entire campaign which led to the reduction of Trichinopoli and effectively broke the back of the French resistance. Orme, though, more or less ignored the fact, and relegated him to second fiddle whenever Clive was around. The experienced Lawrence formulated a daring plan for dividing the English forces, and straddling the Coleroon river, which proved to be a decisive move in the campaign.[74] Orme, however, was convinced that only Clive had the daring and the vision which was needed to break the deadlock. Thus he overlooked Lawrence's role and attributed the plan to his precocious young hero, whose remarkable abilities, he tells us, had already earned him the complete trust and confidence of his superiors:

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69 Ibid. p.187.

70 **Fort St. George Country Correspondence (Public Department) 1751** (Madras, 1910), p.43.

71 OV. 287, T. Saunders - Clive, Sept.15 1751, pp.157-8.

72 Ibid. G.Pigot - Clive, Sept.6 1751, pp.87-9.

73 OV. 287, T. Saunders - Clive, Sept.3 1751 - Dec.20 1751, pp.135-184.

74 OV. 13, p.23.

> The intimacy and confidence with which Major Lawrence distinguished Captain Clive, permitted this officer to suggest to him the resolution of dividing the army into two bodies.[75]

Despite these sins of omission, Orme was in fact very much aware of the roles which had been played by both Lawrence and Saunders. Lawrence's own account of what happened had already been embodied in Richard Owen Cambridge's **History of the War in India,** which had been in print for almost two years. Moreover, the contributions of both men had also been well documented in Orme's own collection of manuscripts and other papers. In the circumstances, Orme could hardly have been ignorant of their importance. What is clear, is that he decided to overlook all the other evidence in order to concentrate more fully on the laurels gained by his hero.

The high profile given to Clive in the first volume, becomes much easier to understand when we bear in mind that Orme, was in fact, heavily dependent on Clive's own evidence for much of his material. Many of the principal episodes in Orme's narrative were based almost entirely on Clive's own information. Indeed, the only major episode where this was not the case was the siege of Arcot where Orme uses at least two other sources. In general, however, Orme was quite content to take his friend's account at face-value and follow his lead. Hence the hero of Orme's piece also became his principal and most trusted witness. This tendency made Orme a prime vehicle for Clive to use in promoting his own publicity cult. Thus Orme's portrait of Clive, as a bold and decisive man of action was, to all intents and purposes, an image which had been carefully cultivated by Clive himself.

In 1752, the year after Clive's triumphant defence of Arcot, the English at Madras found themselves menaced by an army commanded by Chanda Sahib's son, Raza Sahib. The Council reacted by raising a substantial force of 400 Europeans and 1,300 Sepoys, which it sent forth under Clive's command. Orme's narrative has it that Clive, as befitting his character, advanced instantly and purposefully to deal with this threat, only to find that the enemy had decamped at the last minute:

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75 **History,** (1763), vol.1, p.224.

> Captain Clive marched towards them with an intent of attacking their camp by surprise in the rear; but had not proceeded far before he received information that they had suddenly abandoned it.[76]

In actual fact, Clive, the bold man of action, was intimidated by the strength of the entrenchments with which Raza Sahib had surrounded his camp. It left him very dubious as to the outcome of any assault, and he hesitated to attack Raza Sahib at all. Indeed it was only at the repeated urging of the anonymous Thomas Saunders that he even considered doing so.[77] Even then, after Raza Sahib had abandoned his camp, Clive reiterated in his report that he had never had any intention of attacking it in the first place: "that the enemy had quitted their Camp though an extreme strong Situation, even so much that he (Clive) could never have ventur'd to have attack'd them in it."[78]

Eleven years later however, when Clive was writing up this episode for Orme, we see that he was at pains to present himself in a very different light; and to construct a story which was much more in keeping with his image:

> Captain Clive received intelligence that the enemy's camp at Vendalour was not so strongly secured behind as it was in front, on which he took the resolution of making a circuit to attack them in the rear. When he was informed that they had very precipitately broke up their camp and dispersed.[79]

Thus the picture which he now presented to Orme was of a bold, determined and resourceful man of action; a far cry from the apprehensive and hesitant figure of 1752.

The second volume of Orme's **History,** however, was to treat Clive very differently. Volume Two was not published until 1778, several years after Clive's

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76 Ibid. p.213.

77 OV. 287, T. Saunders - Clive,
Feb.12 1752, pp.199-200.
Feb.14 1752, pp.203-4.
Feb.19 1752, p.209.
Feb.22 1752, pp.215-16.

78 **Madras Diary & Consultation Book. (Military Department) 1752** (Madras, 1910), p.5.

79 India II, p.298.

death and almost a decade after Orme's friendship with him had gone sour. The gulf which had opened up between the two men is clearly reflected in the differences between the two volumes. Whereas Orme's earlier work had reflected a positive bias in Clive's favour, Orme was now almost completely detached in his treatment of his former hero. Clive was no longer given the same high profile which he had enjoyed in Volume One; in contrast his portrait was now a rather low key affair. In Orme's story of the war in the Carnatic, Clive had been the centre of attention and everything had seemed to revolve around him. In Volume Two, however, Clive and his achievements were now only one amongst many centres of attention. Although Clive's conquest of Bengal formed one of the major episodes in Orme's narrative, it was not the sole focus of his attention, which was now divided between Bengal and the struggles against the French in the Carnatic and the Deccan. Even in the story of the Bengal War, Clive no longer exercises an overriding influence on the text. His part was now much more peripheral and he tended to feature far less frequently than he had before. Even when he did appear, it was more often in a rather distant, supervisory role.

In Orme's account of the battle of Plassey, for example, Clive was hardly given any credit at all for this, his most celebrated triumph. In sharp contrast to the major battles of the Carnatic war, Clive does not dominate the proceedings at all. He is not in the thick of the action nor is he responsible for any of the important decisions of the battle. Indeed he is hardly recognisable as the great motive force of Volume One and has if anything, remarkably little to do with the major events of the day. The credit for the final, decisive advance, when it came, is given not to Clive but to his deputy, Major Kilpatrick.[80] For Orme, the real tale of Plassey was the rising panic of the Nawab, Siraj-ud-Daula, and this is what his narrative really focusses on. The decisive events of the day take place not on the battlefield but in the enemy camp, where the Nawab's confidence is being gradually undermined.[81] It was not the final English advance which really won the day; as Orme saw it, it was the flight of the Nawab which caused the enemy's resistance to collapse, and proved the

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80 **History** (1778), Vol.2, p.176.

81 Ibid. p.175.

decisive event of the battle.[82] It was because of this, he wrote, that the whole of the English army was able to enter the enemy camp, without encountering any opposition other "than what they met from tents, artillery, baggage and stores ..."[83]

The confident and decisive hero of the Carnatic War is now depicted in a very different light. In his account of the Bengal War, Orme portrayed Clive as a hesitant and rather apprehensive figure, prone, on occasion, to doubt and anxieties. Even before the Plassey campaign had begun, Clive is shown as a very worried man, deeply troubled by his lack of cavalry:

> Confounded .... by the danger of coming to action without horse .... he wrote the same day to the Raja of Burdawan .... inviting them to join them with his cavalry, even when they were only a thousand. But, recollecting that the princes of Indostan never join the standard which doubts of success, his anxieties increased by the dread of those imputations, to which he foresaw the present caution of his conduct would be exposed....[84]

Clive's decision to call a Council of War during the campaign itself, was also presented as an extraordinary measure, which Orme interpreted as hardly the sign of a confident and resolute commander.[85] Indeed, the only really resolute character to emerge from the protracted discussions, is the figure of Eyre Coote, who insisted that the army should march forward against the Nawab.[86] His determination presents a sharp contrast to Clive, who argued that the army should remain where it was until after the rainy season, and wait for outside help before attacking the Nawab.[87] It was a far cry from the assured figure of Volume One, who time and time again, had confidently reassured and rejuvenated the morale of his wavering troops.

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82 Ibid. p.177.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid. p.170.

85 Ibid. p.171.

86 Ibid. p.170.

87 Ibid.

In the first volume Clive had been cast as an almost infallible figure, of near superhuman dimensions. Whatever evidence there had been to the contrary was overlooked or ignored, and there was hardly any criticism of his mistakes. In Volume Two, however, Orme was much more critical of Clive's mistakes and their possible consequences. In the early stages of the Bengal campaign he was at times surprisingly sharp in his observations on Clive's errors. At the storming of the fort of Budge-Budge in 1756, for example, Orme blamed the surprise attack which was made by the enemy on the failure to observe proper precautions, thus implicitly laying the blame at Clive's door.

> Every man laid himself down where he thought best, some in the village, others in the hollow; and from a security which no superiority or appearances in war could justify, the common precaution of stationing centinels was neglected.[88]

Orme then went on to underline the potentially serious consequences of Clive's error. He observed that had the enemy used his cavalry as well as his infantry, the result of the action could have been quite disastrous for the English.

> Had the cavalry advanced and charged the troops in the hollow, at the same time that the infantry began to fire upon the village, it is not impossible that the war would have been concluded at the very first trial of hostilities.[89]

There was now no longer any glossing over of Clive's tactical errors and failures of judgement. Even though the criticism itself was usually very restrained, Clive's mistakes were clearly pointed out and the facts allowed to speak for themselves. Thus we are left in no doubt as to the merits of the night attack which Clive launched against Siraj-ud-Daula in 1757, when the Nawab was encamped outside Calcutta. The attack is presented in no uncertain terms as a near disaster. Orme's narrative tells quite clearly how the attack proceeded to lose elements of its surprise, its sense of direction, and failed completely to achieve its objective, becoming in the end a desperate defence from which Clive and his men were lucky

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88 Ibid. p.123.

89 Ibid. p.124.

to escape.[90] Although once more Orme is very restrained in his actual criticism of Clive himself, he had no qualms about exposing the shortcomings of the operation which he felt had been badly planned and organised from the beginning.[91] The whole episode presents Clive in a very different vein to the prodigy of the Carnatic War, who it seems, could do the impossible and was successful in almost everything he did. Indeed, the whole atmosphere of failure and recrimination which surrounds the event has the effect of reducing Clive's image to very human proportions.

> The troops, officers as well as common men, dispirited by the loss which had been sustained, and the risks to which they had been exposed, as they thought to very little purpose, blamed their commander and called the attempt rash and ill concerted.[92]

Even Volume Two, however, reflects only a very restrained criticism of Clive. Whilst nearly all Clive's actions are carefully scrutinised and at times, subjected to probing criticism, Clive himself is seldom taken to task for his mistakes. All the criticism which is made of him is implied and very indirect, where there is criticism it is in the implication of the actions themselves; Clive himself is never directly blamed. Indeed, compared with the stinging criticisms which Orme makes in the draft versions of his narrative, it is clear that the opinions expressed in the finished version are really quite moderate and have been toned down considerably. A general comparison between the various draft versions of the **History** and the finished work reveals that, although Orme was beginning to have grave doubts about Clive's composure and ability as a commander, he was still determined not to represent him in too unfavourable a light. To this extent the author consciously modified or omitted many of the criticisms which he himself had made in his drafts.

Many of the most telling criticisms which Orme made were of Clive's conduct in the events leading up to and during the battle of Plassey. Orme's original account of Clive's behaviour during the Council of War, for example, had represented Clive's apparent anxiety and indecision in a far worse light. Originally,Orme had been

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90 Ibid. pp.131-4.

91 Ibid. pp.134-5.

92 Ibid. p.134.

of the opinion that Clive's real reason in calling a Council of War had been to exonerate his own reluctance to advance: "And in order to exculpate himself he determined to act under the sanction of a Council of War which he assembled the next day."[93] Subsequently, however, he thought better of it and rephrased what could have been a very damning revelation. In the finished narrative all we are told is that Clive "therefore, determined to consult his officers and assembled them the next day in council."[94] Orme also felt that Clive's decision to change his mind and march forward to engage the Nawab was not entirely his own. He attributed it to the influence of the resolute Eyre Coote:

> For as soon as it broke up, he (Clive) retired alone into the adjoining grove where he remained near an hour in deep meditation; when Major Coote joined him and after some conversation with this officer he was convinced of the absurdity of stopping where he was and immediately gave orders that the army should cross the river the next morning.[95]

In the finished text, however, Orme focused all the attention firmly on Clive, who was given the credit for having changed his mind and made his own decision. As Orme later wrote, after the Council of War had broken up Clive retired alone into a nearby grove, where he spent nearly an hour in deep meditation. Then he returned, having made up his mind and now determined to advance against the Nawab.[96]

Orme went much further in his portrayal of Clive's doubts and anxieties in his draft than he ever did in his text. In his draft, for example, Orme portrayed Clive as a very worried and deeply disturbed figure on the eve of Plassey. "The soldiers slept, but few of the officers, and least of all the commander; who was observed to pass the night in much agitation both of body and mind."[97] The dawn of the day of the battle showed Clive completely unnerved and overawed by the sight

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93 OV. 164(a), p.108.

94 **History** (1778), vol.2, p.170.

95 OV. 164(a), pp.109-10.

96 **History** (1778), vol.2, p.171.

97 OV. 164(a), p.111.

of the enemy. It left him very doubtful of the prospect of success and he made up his mind to withdraw as soon as night fell:

> Colonel Clive ..... saw the morning break with increasing anxiety, at sunrise he went with another person upon the terras of the hunting house, from whence having contemplated the enemy's array, he was surprised at their numerous, splendid and martial appearance. His companions asked him what he thought would be the event; to which he replied, we must make the best fight we can during the day, and at night sling our muskets over our shoulders and march back to Calcutta.[98]

There is hardly a trace of any of these doubts or fears in Orme's final version of the battle of Plassey. Instead all we are told is that Clive, on viewing the enemy was merely "surprised at their numbers, as well as the splendour and confidence of their array."[99]

The scathing indictments of Clive, which are made in the draft, reveal the extent to which Orme's enthusiasm and admiration for him had gradually worn off, in the long years following the publication of Volume One. Orme, it is clear, no longer believed in either the man or the image which he had helped to create. Nevertheless, he took great pains not to allow his personal disillusionment to intrude too directly into the finished narrative. In the first volume of the **History** Orme had created the legend of Clive, and with it had established a literary reputation for himself. His own literary reputation had been woven around the heroic image of Clive. Thus it was in nobody's interest, least of all Orme's, to destroy it.

The friendship with Clive had endured for almost two decades. During that time Clive had been catapulted to fame and fortune, while Orme had acquired considerable renown as a historian. For Orme however, this was never quite enough. He had always regarded Clive in a rather patronising light, as a rude and relatively unsophisticated soldier. The enormous success which he achieved was, Orme felt, out of all measure to his abilities, and Orme came actively to resent him for it. Indeed,

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98 Ibid. pp.115-16.

99 **History** (1803), vol.2, p.174.

given Orme's ambitious and highly self-important nature, it must have been deeply galling to see Clive rise so far above him; whilst he himself had to face financial hardship and relative obscurity. Nevertheless Orme kept his jealousy and resentment under control, and continued to work with Clive whose abilities he still respected and whose power he now had to acknowledge. The real turning point in their relationship was the quarrel which erupted between Clive and Richard Smith. Not only did Smith's criticisms exacerbate all the resentments which Orme had been struggling to keep in check for so long; they also served to tarnish indelibly Clive's image in the eyes of his old friend. Smith, who had set out to strip away all the glamour and prestige which surrounded the figure of the great Clive, succeeded only too well and the result is mirrored in the second volume of the **History.**

PART III: WORKS

Chapter VII

The History.

Orme's first step as a historian began with the draft which he composed in Madras in 1752. He put together the second draft in 1753, while he was on his way to England. Thereafter, the project was shelved for several years, whilst Orme devoted all his energies to his career as a Madras Company servant. It was only after his career at Madras had finally ended, and he had returned home to England, that Orme resumed work on the **History** in earnest. Within three years of his return, Orme was ready and in 1763 he published the first volume. The second volume, as we know, was not published for another fifteen years, during which time Orme was to become extremely depressed and disillusioned with his subject. The earliest draft we have of this is an extract dealing with the Fall of Calcutta, which was written in 1756. This, however, was put to one side and it was not until he had completed Volume One that Orme returned to the war in Bengal. Orme was to make at least two more drafts of his second volume, both of them strongly reflect the distaste which he had begun to acquire for the events in Bengal by the end of the 1760's. Both drafts, however, were to be crucially modified by the time Orme came to write his final version.

Orme's aims, when he originally set out to write the **History**, were very narrow and closely focused; for he was very much aware of the rather limited scope offered by his subject matter. He was acutely conscious of the peculiar and small scale nature of the war between the English and the French in India, which, when compared with the great campaigns of Western Europe, appeared to be little more than a series of small and insignificant actions. The conflict in India, he felt, lacked the scale and intensity that would have captured the European imagination; instead it was:

> A subject which afforded Battles without bloodshed and Councils of State directed by men called to them by Chance ..... When I say Battles without Bloodshed, I only mean that these will be deemed so when compared to

> such as imprint the Memory of their fatal Effects to all posterity. The strain of this Indian War laying upon the Europeans, and these never having exceeded the number of fifteen hundred on a side, the Events of such conflicts may have much of the merit of more conspicuous Actions but can never acquire the Reputation of them.[1]

The struggle in the Carnatic, Orme feared, would never provide a scenario worthy of a work of history. As a result he seriously doubted whether he could hope to attempt anything more than a straight forward record of the actions and events.[2]

It was curiosity, more than anything else, which first drew Orme to take an interest in the struggle between Chanda Sahib and Muhammad Ali:

> Curiosity led me to enquire into the origins of this war, into the Titles and Pretenders, and into all the remarkable Events, which these had already occasioned.[3]

As he paid closer attention to these events, he became more and more aware of the crucial role which was being played by the European troops in the conflict. This sharpened his interest and had the effect of greatly widening the scope of his work. What he had originally seen as merely a dispute between two native princes now started to assume an entirely new dimension:

> I had scarcely brought down my story at the end of the Second Book to the present War of Carnatica before I found that the chief stress of it had lain upon the arms of the European auxiliaries. I found that their presence had become the chief influence in all the Transactions of Importance which happened after they had taken the field.[4]

Henceforth Orme was to view the war in the Carnatic in a very different light, as part of a much larger struggle between the English and the French. He also came to perceive that it was a struggle which both sides considered of great importance. The wholehearted vigour with which the English and the French threw themselves into the

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1 India II, Preface to the "Revolutions of Carnatica", p.340. This Preface is undated but as it belongs to the second draft of Orme's History we can probably date to 1753, when Orme was returning home to England with Clive.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p.339.

4 Ibid. p.339.

conflict made it abundantly clear to Orme that both sides felt their vital interests were at stake:

> In the beginning of the year 1751 I found the Coast of Coromandel involved in a war, between two competitors for the Government of Carnatica. I found the English and the French ranged on the different sides, and assisting this dispute, with an ardour which demonstrated, that both thought their utmost interests concerned in the event of it.[5]

There was, Orme felt, a general lack of knowledge or information about what was happening in India during this critical period. Thus he became increasingly enthusiastic about writing some account of it. He was sure that the subject would have a very novel appeal and that it would be received with considerable interest. So far, however, the distant events in India had not been treated with the respect or the consideration which they deserved. In the circumstances, he felt that what was needed was a serious and substantial account of the events in the Carnatic.

> I mean it not as a reflection on any persons, when I say, that I found no one who could give me an account, succinct and coherent enough to satisfy me. Particular employments receive general Events, as Amusements, and, as amusements, they are lost in the succession of new ones. I nevertheless discovered sufficient to make me think that the whole , if carefully digested into some form, would afford a narrative, which from the circumstances contained in it, would be acceptable to many.[6]

Orme was not alone in his convictions, which were widely held by the other English writers who were beginning to write on India. Both John Swinton, who was thought to have compiled the Indian part of the **Modern Universal History,**[7] and Richard Owen Cambridge, the author of **An Account of the War in India 1750-1760,**[8] felt the same way. Both were struck by the rapid extension of British power in India and both wanted to convey the commercial and political importance of such an

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5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 **Critical Review,** Vol.8, 1759, p.261.

8 R.O. Cambridge, **An Account of the War in India 1750-1760** (1761), p.vi.

acquisition of territory. Despite this, Orme did not see himself as celebrating British expansion in the East. Indeed, he was very much against the idea of an empire in India. Influenced as he was by the political legacy of the Roman Republic, Orme viewed the acquisition of new conquests in India with deep foreboding.[9] Along with many of his contemporaries, Orme attributed the decline of the Roman Republic, and the decay of its political virtue to Rome's acquisition of huge Asian territories, and her consequent rise to world empire. The resulting wealth and luxury led to an increasing corruption and decadence which had corroded the moral fibre and military vigour of the old Republican spirit. Orme believed that the same fate would befall England. Indian conquests would bring with them wealth, luxury and corruption; conquest for conquest's sake would, as in Rome, lead eventually to the degeneration and enslavement of Britain. This was the warning he presented in the picture of Bengal with which he opened his second volume. In his depiction of Bengal, with its effeminate and enervated natives, Orme provided a salutary example of commercial society which, corrupted by wealth and luxury, had atrophied and stagnated.[10]

A war to defend commerce, however, was a very different thing. What Orme envisaged in India was a settlement based on trade and commerce. Like many eighteenth century Englishmen, Orme believed that a war to defend commerce was quite compatible with the maintenance of civic virtue and military vigour. From this perspective he saw the wars in Bengal and the Carnatic not as a struggle in the interests of empire but as a battle for the preservation of a vital national interest - commerce. The preservation of British commerce in the East Indies was, as he saw it, absolutely dependant on the success of these wars:

> From the year 1745 to the conclusion of the late peace, the English have been continually engaged in war, in one or other of these divisions: and the preservation of their commerce in the East Indies absolutely depended on the conduct and success of the wars of Coromandel and Bengal.[11]

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9 OV. 202, Orme - R. Smith, April 17 1765, p.119.

10 History, vol.2, pp.4-5.

11 Ibid. vol.1, pp.33-4.

In defending the interests of the East India Company Clive and his contemporaries were, in effect, performing a great patriotic service:

> I have nevertheless endeavoured in this Narrative to pay some tribute however small to the merit of those who have exerted themselves in defence of Interests, which if commerce is allowed to be the Basis of the British Nation's may justly be called the Interests of their Country.[12]

Orme's main concern, however, was with the fortunes of war. As a patriotic historian, what he found most appealing was the stirring story of British military endeavour and achievement; thus it was his declared aim to highlight his nation's martial success in India. It was in this cause, for example, that he devoted the first volume of the **History**, which he dedicated: "To his most excellent majesty George III, this attempt to commemorate the successes of the British arms in Indostan is most humbly dedicated."[13] Orme, as we know, had a great admiration for the East India Company men of his day and he regarded their achievements in a truly epic light. His determination to pay tribute to the heroic deeds of his countrymen and contemporaries was something which had been with him from the beginning. Indeed in later life, when he became tired and jaded with his work, it was one of the few things from which he still derived any comfort:

> Not even vanity still supported me more in the prosecution of this laborious work than the satisfaction which I received in commemorating the merit of a few individuals who were personally attached to me.[14]

Orme clearly saw himself in the role of a contemporary historian, chronicling the deeds of his generation and those he knew personally. However, once he had finished with Volume Two he found himself forced to contemplate an India with which he was no longer familiar and which he found increasingly unpalatable. In the circumstances it was hardly surprising that his enthusiasm for the subject began to fade, and that Volume Three was never written.

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12 India II, p.340.

13 History, vol.1, Dedication.

14 OV. 222, Orme - J. Caillaud, Feb.10 1766, pp.125-6.

The intellectual environment in which the **History** was written reflects many of the standard influences on eighteenth century British culture. Much of this is evident from Orme's library, which tells us a great deal about the man and his intellectual interests. Orme was a great lover and collector of books. He was also a great student and he was never happier than when he was amongst his books. He assembled a very large and valuable collection, which when finally sold numbered well over 2,000 items, and raised the very considerable sum of £1,179. 16s. 6d.[15] Orme's library shows him to have been a very learned and cosmopolitan man, widely read in the literary culture of his time. Aside from a great number of classical texts there were also a number of French, Italian and Spanish works of poetry, history and philosophy, which were easily the most sizeable elements in the whole collection. In addition to this, there was also a substantial body of travel and geographical literature, which seems to have formed a staple element in many libraries of the era. Orme, in fact, was a man of several, very diverse interests. He was a keen aesthetician and owned several works on art, architecture and general aesthetics. Yet at the same time, he also took a great interest in science, and had a number of treatises, mostly on medicine. Medicine, as we know, was a lifelong hobby with Orme, and it was reflected in the number of friends which he had amongst the medical profession.

Orme also devoted a considerable amount of his time to reading military history. Indeed, as Boswell reveals, it dominated his reading while he was working on his **History**: "He said he read only military books, and every battle and siege that he related ever so shortly he knew in its minutest detail."[16] Orme's preoccupation with military matters was very much reflected in his library, which included a number of works on tactics and fortification, as well as several memoirs of the great soldiers of his day.

Perhaps the most overriding influence on Orme's intellectual development was the legacy of Ancient Greece and Rome. The classics exercised a powerful influence over the outlook of educated men in the eighteenth century.

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15 B.M. Sale Catalogue,S - C.S. 28(10), April 25 1796.

16 **Boswell in Extremis 1776-8**, Ed. C. Mc.Weiss and F.A. Pottle (New York, 1970), pp.280-1.

Orme's reading reflects both the influence of his early classical education and the great taste he acquired for the subject in later life. His library had an overwhelming preponderance of classical authors; indeed of the 2,000 odd items, nearly half were works by Greek and Roman authors. It is clear from the large number of books in Latin and Greek that Orme read both classical languages with equal fluency.

The evidence suggests that Orme studied classical history fairly closely and that he found it a very useful source of parallel and comparison. For example, he paid particular attention to the life and career of Alexander the Great, which he studied in some detail.[17] Hence he saw the overthrow of Nazir Jang, the ruler of the vast Deccan plateau, by a small body of French troops in a very similar light to Alexander's achievement in conquering the whole of Asia:

> Thus a handful of Europeans .... in Indostan have been found the chief instrument in deciding that of an Empire ... I will therefore venture to call this, an event not to be paralleled in the history of any times later than those of Alexander of Macedon.[18]

In his study of the events after Alexander's death, Orme was to pay close attention to the siege of Rhodes in 304 B.C., which he found a particularly useful source of instruction and guidance:

> The Account of this siege is the longest article in our historian and well merits the attention of those who may be employed in similar operations. It has already doubtless afforded Instructions to many.[19]

The classical influence is especially pronounced in Orme's early reading. Indeed by his middle twenties, Orme had read most of the important Greek and Latin historians. Of all these, it was perhaps the figure of Thucydides who exercised the greatest influence over Orme and his work. Orme had the greatest admiration for Thucydides. He saw in him the embodiment of all his ideas as to how history should be written:

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17 OV. 213, ff.1-64.

18 India II, p.379.

19 OV.213, f.40.

> ... when I had read 2 books, I said to myself, is it possible to write history in any other manner? Every hour's progress confirmed me more and more in that opinion.[20]

Despite this, Orme always insisted that he had never consciously modelled himself on Thucydides, and that he had always relied purely on his own subject matter for his ideas:

> .... Thus far he was undoubtedly my master; but from that time to this I have not read 10 pages in him, for during the whole time that I was composing I never sought for ideas, plans, style or arrangement but in my own subject.[21]

However, even though Orme had already completed both of his two preliminary drafts before he read Thucydides, there is no denying that his discovery of Thucydides was an important moment in his development. Indeed, well over a decade later Orme was to remember quite clearly the moment when he had first come across him.[22]

For all his protestations to the contrary, it is quite clear that Orme was cast in very much the same mould as his hero. Like Thucydides, who was considered to be the father of the school of politico-military history,[23] Orme confined himself purely to giving an account of military operations and political actions. His literary style too was in much the same vein as Thucydides', who was held up as the ideal exponent of the sort of narrative history towards which Orme himself aspired. Like Thucydides,[24] Orme aimed only at giving a plain and intelligible record of the events, allowing the facts to speak for themselves and leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. While Orme himself denied it, the resemblance was all too obvious to his literary contemporaries, many of whom were to bestow on him the accolade of the "British Thucydides."[25]

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20 OV. 222, Orme - R. Smith, Feb.1 1766, p.123.

21 Ibid. pp.123-4.

22 Ibid. p.123.

23 A. Momigliano, **Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography** (Oxford, 1977), p.141.

24 F.E. Adcock, **Thucydides and his History** (Cambridge, 1963), p.46.

25 **Gentleman's Magazine**, vol.49, 1779, p.252.

Orme was also greatly influenced by the tradition of annalist and antiquarian writing, which had come to characterise historical writing in the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. His earliest acquaintance of history in fact was with annalist chronicles such as Gabriel Daniel's **Histoire de France** and Rapin - Thoyras, **Histoire d'Angleterre.**[26] These chronicles were distinguished by their meticulous attention to research and detail, and they were structured around a strict narrative and chronological framework. They indulged in only the most minimal exploration of character and motive, and eschewed any attempts at analysis or discussion. Their overriding concern was with presenting the information and retailing their facts and their tone generally tended to be flat and unemotive. Orme was very much impressed by these works and he studied both Rapin[27] and Daniel[28] with great care. It was to be reflected in his work, much of which tended to echo their most characteristic features.

By the mid-eighteenth century, new approaches to historical writing were beginning to appear, which we, in retrospect, call the ideas of the Enlightenment. Orme, like many other writers of his day, was deeply influenced by the intellectual philosophy of the Enlightenment and its curious, questioning spirit. He had a typically Enlightenment enthusiasm for the expansion of the European horizon in other parts of the world. His library, for example, revealed a wide range of geographical interests, which included the Near East, China, Japan, Africa and the Americas. Despite the narrow focus of his work, it was clear that Orme did not view the experience of India in isolation, but as part of a much broader European pattern. He devoted a great deal of study to the European opening up of South America, in which he saw many parallels with the English advance in India.[29] The enormous impact which was made by the tiny European presence in India was, for him, very reminiscent of the achievements of Cortez and Pizarro in the Americas:

> The oriental compliments paid to them on this occasion, were, for once, not destitute of truth; for excepting the conquests of Cortez and Pizarro

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26 OV.206, p.85.

27 OV. 205, pp.1-12.

28 Ibid. pp.13-16, 22-32, 35-8.

29 OV.207, pp.41-54.

> in the New World, never did so small a force decide the fate of so large a sovereignty.[30]

In his letters to William Robertson, with whom Orme was in close contact whilst he was writing his **History of America** (1776), he extended the parallel even further. Both experiences, he felt, had proceeded along very similar lines; beginning first as a private interest and then being gradually taken over by a state which had previously contributed next to nothing.[31]

The historical philosophy of the Enlightenment writers was very far removed from the aims of the annalist historians. Led by Montesquieu and Voltaire, they introduced a new school of philosophical history, which aimed to go beyond merely giving a record of events and actions. They sought to sift and discuss the facts, not for their own sake, but for the underlying principles of human nature which they revealed. In Voltaire's own words the chief use of history was:

> .... to know, so far as I can the manners of peoples and to study the human mind, I shall regard the order of succession of kings and chronology as my guide, but not as the object of my work.[32]

There is little doubt that Orme was very well acquainted with the seminal works of Enlightenment thought, and that he had been so from an early age. For example, by the time he was 25 he had read both Montesquieu's **L'Ésprit des Loix** (1748) and Voltaire's **Siècle de Louis XIV** (1751),[33] both of which were to have a profound impact on the historiography of the day. Orme was also very familiar with the philosophical and historical writings of the Scottish Enlightenment; and as his library shows, he was well versed in the work of such men as Hume, Robertson, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. This strong Enlightenment influence is clearly reflected in Orme's early writings on India;[34] two essays entitled "A General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan" and "The Effeminacy of Inhabitants of Indostan", which he wrote in 1752 and 1763 respectively. Both essays record Orme's

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30 **History**, vol.1, p.157.

31 OV.176, Orme - W. Robertson, June 23 1773, pp.158-9.

32 J.B. Black, **The Art of History** (1926), p.34.

33 OV.206, p.91.

34 **Fragments** pp.397-472.

own personal impressions of Indian culture and society and are moulded almost entirely around the themes of despotism and climate articulated by Montesquieu in his **L'Ésprit des Loix.**

For all his familiarity with the philosophical history of Voltaire and Montesquieu, all the evidence suggests that, when it came to the **History** itself, Orme consciously chose not to write in philosophical vein. As he himself had declared from the beginning, he did not approach the **History** with any underlying philosophical theme or vision in mind and envisaged only a very limited work: "Neither my talents or Ambition permitted me to affect the reputation or attempt the dignity of an Historian".[35] Orme felt that the small scale nature of his subject did not allow him the scope to attempt anything like a full scale of work of philosophical history. Thus he resigned himself to writing a straight forward, narrative history and made no attempt to go beyond giving a simple and unbiased chronicle of events: "I therefore very contentedly took events just as they happened, and have described them with an impartiality which no man alive can call in question".[36] Thus he deliberately eschewed the methods of Enlightenment history writing and followed in the footsteps of the annalist chroniclers he had read in his youth. Given the limitations of his subject, Orme felt that he had to concern himself first and foremost with the facts. This, it seemed, was the best way to establish Indian history as a subject worthy of serious attention and study.

Although Orme's early reading contained almost next to no Oriental history at all, in later life he was to amass a very considerable collection of Oriental books, as well as several manuscripts. Hence his library contained well over 100 books,which were devoted to all sorts of Oriental subjects. Orme's Orientalist reading reflects the two main poles of British interest in Asia during the eighteenth century.[37] On the one hand, he was well versed in the old school of British Orientalism, which prior to 1750, had traditionally focused on Arabic and Turkish studies. Like Gibbon, Orme came to own a large number of works of Arabic and

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35 India II, pp.339-40.

36 Ibid. p.340.

37 P.J. Marshall, "Oriental Studies", in **The History of the University of Oxford, The Eighteenth Century**, Ed. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1986), pp.551-63.

Turkish history, and he was well versed in the work of the eighteenth century's foremost Arabic scholars, men like Jean Gagnier and Simon Ockley. His reading also reflects the increasing shift in interest from the Levant to the Indian subcontinent, which began to take place from the middle of the century onwards. The new Orientalism concerned itself initially with Islamic studies. It fostered an intensified interest in Persian, which was the diplomatic and administrative language of Mughal India during Orme's time. Thus it is no surprise that the principal element in Orme's Oriental collection was made up of works on the Mughal Empire and various aspects of Persian studies.

By the time Orme came to publish the first volume of the **History**, he had acquired a substantial knowledge of contemporary British writing on India. Although they did not exercise anything like a formative influence over his work, all the evidence suggests that Orme borrowed quite extensively from the major British-Indian historians of his day, such as James Fraser, Alexander Dow and Richard Owen Cambridge. The first work of Indian history, **The History of Nadir Shah,** was written by James Fraser in 1742. This dealt with the life of the Persian, Nadir Shah, who in 1739 had invaded India and sacked Delhi. Using some of the valuable Persian manuscripts in his possession, Fraser was also able to give a short history of the Mughal Emperors. This in particular, was of great use to Orme, who found it an invaluable source of information on Mughal and pre-Mughal India.[38] He did not hesitate to make use of Fraser's work and openly acknowledged his debt to him in his narrative.[39]

Richard Owen Cambridge was the first English literary figure to write about India. In 1761, two years before Orme, he also wrote an account of the Carnatic War, entitled **An Account of the War in India 1750-1760.** Much of it covered the same ground as Orme's **History** and indeed drew on many of the same sources. Both men were very conscious of the ground-breaking nature of their work and they shared a similar focus. Cambridge, too, saw his work not as a history of India but as a war between two European nations, whose contact with the natives had

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38 OV.134, pp.94-111.

39 **History**, vol.1, p.19.

so far been very limited.[40] He also had a great admiration for the achievements of his compatriots and shared Orme's determination to glorify the deeds of the British in India.[41] The two men enjoyed a certain amount of personal contact, and it appears that Orme had been on the verge of handing his papers over to Cambridge before deciding to embark on his own project. Cambridge, it seems, had also had his own plans for writing a proper full scale work of history on the war; Orme's **History,** however, had superseded his own compilation and made these plans redundant:

> He (Cambridge) had also a promise of Mr. Orme's papers; but that gentleman happening to return from India at this juncture, with an intention to publish himself the history which afterwards appeared, my father considered that his own work would now be in a good measure superfluous and therefore relinquished the further prosecution of his plan.[42]

As one would expect, there were strong parallels between the two works. Orme was clearly very familiar with Cambridge's work and frequently used him as a source of reference.[43] The evidence also suggests, that Orme was not averse to borrowing passages from Cambridge's narrative. For example, Orme's description of the Marathas in the opening book of the **History** was moulded almost entirely on Cambridge's original account. In Cambridge's version, the non-violent religious beliefs of the Marathas were drily contrasted with their bloodthirsty practices during a campaign:

> It may seem strange that these Marathas, who are Bramins, and so strict observers of the Gentou religion ..... that they will never kill the most offensive animals that crawl about them, should without any scruple, eagerly employ their sabres to the destruction of their fellow creatures. The salve for this extraordinary contradiction, is a device of their priests, who by the sacrifice of a Buffalo, with many mysterious and enthusiastic

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40 Cambridge, **An Account of the War in India,** p.vi.

41 R.O. Cambridge, **Works** (1803), p.1iv.

42 Ibid. p.1ii.

43 OV. 156, pp.29-37.

> ceremonies absolve their warriors from the restrictions which bind the vulgar.[44]

In his own account, Orme was largely to rephrase Cambridge's words but overall, the tone and effect remained almost exactly the same:

> But not withstanding their warlike character, they are in other respects, the most scrupulous observers of the religion of Brama; never eating of anything that has life, never killing the insects which molest them: however, a buffalo sacrificed, with many strange ceremonies, atones for the blood of their own species which they shed in war.[45]

Orme's inability to read Persian left him very dependent on the work of Persian scholars like James Fraser and Alexander Dow for his knowledge of Muslim India. Dow's **History of Indostan**, which was published in 1768, was largely derived from his translation of the history of the Muslim court historian, Muhammad Kasim Firishta. Dow's work was intended to be more or less a general history of India. In its final form, it covered the history of the Mughal Empire, from its peak at the death of Akbar right down to its slow decline during the early eighteenth century. Orme found Dow's translation very useful and studied Firishta's work with close attention. As with Fraser's work, it provided him with a vital source of background information upon which he drew heavily.[46] For example, he relied heavily on Firishta in his account of Bengal, in the opening stages of Volume II. "It appears from the history of Feritsha that the sovereignty of the Mahommedans was established in Bengal about the year 1200."[47]

Peter Marshall in his essay on "The Founding Fathers of the Asiatic Society",[48] identified three major strands which exercised a strong influence on the work of the early British scholars of India. Amongst these influences he numbered a "Christian upbringing, a grounding in the classics and an awareness of

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44 Cambridge, **An Account of the War in India**, p.80.

45 **History**, vol.1, pp.40-1.

46 OV.5, pp.7-111.

47 **History**, vol.2, p.5.

48 P.J. Marshall, "The Founding Fathers of the Asiatic Society," in **Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal**, vol.27 (1985), pp.63-77.

Enlightenment preoccupations."[49] Of these, religion seems to have been the only factor which was conspicuously missing from Orme's intellectual make up. By all accounts, he was extremely religious in his youth, and his early essays on India do have strong Christian overtones. However, all traces of this seem to have disappeared by the time he finally returned to England. What is especially significant is the marked absence of any sort of biblical or patristic literature, which was such a major element in the libraries of contemporaries such as Edmund Burke and Edward Gibbon. Thus the intellectual impulses behind the **History**, typical though they may seem, appear to have been almost entirely secular.

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49 Ibid. p.77.

Orme's Historical Method

The key to Orme's historical method lay in the comprehensive nature of his sources. The overwhelming majority of these were primary sources, often drawn from eyewitnesses or actual participants in the events themselves. These sources were able to provide detailed and specific information, which enabled Orme to develop a very precise idea of the events he was later to describe. Furthermore, he had the good fortune to be personally acquainted with nearly all the major "Indian" figures of his period, which also proved a great advantage. It ensured regular and persistent access to his sources, enabling him to double check his facts and go over them, until he had developed a clear mental picture of the events he wished to describe.

Most of the material for Volume One of the **History** was provided by Clive, who also played an important role in providing Orme with access to other sources. For example, it was Clive who put Orme in touch with John Dalton and arranged for him to use Dalton's own journal on the Coromandel war.[50] Orme placed great value on Dalton as a source, and he came to regard him as second only to Clive in importance:

> The clearness with which you (Dalton) describe everything, no longer suffers me to depend on the information I collected of either that or other transactions which you have described except those at which Lord Clive was present.[51]

Clive also acted as an important source of Orme's second volume, although this time it was mostly for the sections dealing with the Bengal War. By then, however, Orme had become much more discriminating in his attitude towards him. Whereas in Volume One he had tended to accept Clive's word as the final say, by now he was beginning to weigh his evidence alongside that of other informants, such as Eyre Coote. This, as we have already discussed, was very evident in the various drafts which Orme made of the Bengal expedition. These reveal that Orme was now very much aware of episodes such as Clive's carelessness during the assault on Budge

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50 OV.15, J. Dalton - Clive, Dec.13 1762, p.135.

51 India II, Orme - J. Dalton, Dec.22 1762, p.449.

Budge fort, and his badly organised and near-disastrous night attack on the enemy camp outside Calcutta, none of which had been mentioned in any of Clive's own material. Nevertheless, Clive still remained a major source of documents and other source materials; and it was through him that Orme obtained access to the important geographical papers which were provided by men like John Call and James Rennell.

John Call was the Chief Engineer at Madras and was a close friend of Clive,[52] through whom he provided Orme with many of his maps and charts of South India.[53] He was also responsible for drawing up many plans of the towns and forts in the Carnatic, which Orme had at his disposal.[54] The services of an expert engineer such as Call proved of immense value to Orme, providing him with precise information as to the natural surroundings, fortifications and layout of a town, even if he had never been there. This in turn enabled Orme to depict the various actions, in attack or defence of these towns, with a much greater degree of precision and clarity. Orme set great store by Call's expertise and he printed a considerable number of his plans in his second volume. Call also acted as an important source for the later stages of the war in the Carnatic,[55] where he was to provide a valuable account of the events leading up to the fall of Pondicherry.

Another important source was the figure of Eyre Coote, who served first under Clive in the Bengal War and then as the commander of the British forces in the final stages of the Carnatic War. As such, he was an important source for the Bengal War,[56] where he was used to check the accuracy of Clive's material and frequently given the greater priority. For example, the story which Orme recorded in his draft version of Clive losing his nerve before the battle of Plassey and even falling asleep during it,[57] was drawn from Coote's account. Coote was also an important source for the final stages of the war in the south,[58] especially for the

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52 DNB, vol.3, pp.705-6.

53 OV.30, J. Call - Orme, Jan.22 1767, p.75

54 Ibid. April 3 1766, p.65.

55 OV.60, pp.13-48.

56 India VII, pp.1650-1672.

57 OV.164(a), p.119.

58 India VIII, pp.1898-2017.

crucial Wandewash campaign, which finally decided the struggle between the English and the French.

However, the man who probably contributed the most to Orme's account of military affairs on the Coromandel Coast was his friend John Caillaud. Caillaud provided the material for at least three separate episodes. His letters to Orme from December 1756 to September 1757 formed the basis of Orme's account of Madura and Tinnevelli affairs, and also provided him with the material for his account of the relief of Trichinopoli in 1757.[59] Similarly, it was Caillaud's journal of events from December 1758 to February 1759 which formed the mainstay of Orme's account of the mission, to seek help from Tanjore.[60] Orme himself was fully aware of the importance of Caillaud's contribution. As he explained to Caillaud himself, he greatly relied on him for his information on Coromandel military matters, for hardly anyone else had the knowledge or the ability to describe them as well as Caillaud.[61] He had, he said, already benefited so much from the clarity of Caillaud's insights that without them, he was sure that his **History** would not go half as well.[62]

Orme's contact with the Frenchman, General Bussy, also gave him access to the other side of the picture. Bussy was his most important French source and he provided Orme with a crucial insight into the war in the South. Bussy's material was divided into three phases. First, there was his account of his own operations in the Deccan, from the arrival of Godeheu in August 1754 to May 1756.[63] The second extract also dealt with Bussy's activities in the Deccan and followed them from the time of his arrival in Hyderabad in June 1756 to his return in 1758.[64] Finally, there was his account of the final stages of the war in the Carnatic, which focused on the Wandewash campaign.[65] Orme regarded Bussy's information with the greatest respect and made two trips to Paris especially to see him. Indeed it seems that Orme

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59 OV.52, pp.37-124.

60 OV.62, pp.107-122.

61 OV.222, Orme - J. Caillaud, Feb.10 1766, p.125.

62 Ibid.

63 OV.55, pp.27-43.

64 OV.57, pp.1-71.

65 OV.63, Jan./Feb. 1778, pp.85-115.

valued Bussy above most of his English sources. In 1778, for example, he was willing to go all the way to Paris and write a completely new version of the battle of Wandewash in French, merely so that Bussy could examine it.[66] When Orme's second volume was published later that year, it was clear that his narrative of Wandewash had been literally transcribed from the account which he had given Bussy.

Orme also drew extensively on the official records and papers of the East India Company. He used almost every aspect of the records of Madras and Bengal, from their correspondence and dispatches to their various public proceedings and consultations. These sources frequently provided him with material which was more contemporary and more immediate than the individual accounts which he generally relied on. For example, Orme's use of the Fort St. David Consultations as a source for the siege of Fort St. David in 1758 proved quite invaluable to him. It gave him access to the defenders' state of mind and enabled him to see directly into the Council's deliberations on the possibility of continuing the defence:

> The council having taken the foregoing into consideration are unanimously of opinion that considering our present situation having little or no ammunition and no prospect of Relief and that the enemy's fleet is coming into the road, probably with an intent to land their seamen for an assault that the most prudent step that can be taken will be to procure the most advantageous capitulation for the Garrison and Inhabitants that can be.[67]

The insight was reflected in the narrative, which was then able to explain the motives behind the decision to surrender the fort:

> Nevertheless, it was apprehended that the French squadron might land a great number of men, with whom the troops on shore would make a general assault, which the garrison and defences were not deemed in a condition to resist. On which, Mr. Polier and Mr. Wynch, the temporary governor, thought it necessary to hold a Council of war, in which it was

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66 Ibid.

67 OV.52, p.159.

unanimously decided, that they ought to capitulate on the best terms they could make.[68]

Orme also made great use of private correspondence, which provided another principal source of information. In this respect he was unusually fortunate in that he had access to the correspondence of many of the leading figures, both in Bengal and in the Carnatic. This provided Orme with the most direct of all primary sources, and gave him great insight into the development of a campaign as it was seen by its commanders. For example, the letters written by Admiral Pocock to Clive from March 1758 to October 1759,[69] described the war in the South, and would have given Orme a considerable insight into the movement of the English and French fleets, as well as the aims and expectations behind their actions. Similarly, Orme's ability to understand and portray the complex, shifting politics of Bengal must have owed a great deal to his access to Clive's correspondence with Luke Scrafton[70] and William Watts,[71] the British agents at the Nawab's court.

Orme also accumulated a great deal of geographical material amongst his sources. Much of this information was drawn from the observations of serving British officers, such as John Call and James Rennell. Thus for much of his time Orme found himself working from original fieldwork and first hand surveys.[72] Orme's friend Alexander Dalrymple, later the first Hydrographer of the East India Company, was another important source of maps and charts. He too, played a considerable part in filling in the gap in Orme's collection.[73] Orme also went for information to the leading geographer of his day, the Frenchman Jean Baptiste D'Anville. It seems that he had very clear-cut ideas as to the information he wanted, for having first studied the maps which D'Anville had sent him, he then proceeded to outline the specific areas on which he wanted further information.[74]

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68 History, vol.2, pp.312-13.

69 OV.290, pp.1-109.

70 OV.312, pp.1-25.

71 OV.313, pp.1-8.

72 OV.6, pp.49-72.

73 OV.71, A.Dalrymple - Orme, Dec.14 1775, p.5.

74 OV.50, pp.1-4.

One of the pronounced features of Orme's attitude towards his sources was the great efforts which he made to obtain both sides of the picture, in order to ensure its clarity and impartiality. For example, despite the abundance of the geographical material in his possession, Orme also went to the trouble of collecting French maps and plans.[75] These were mostly in printed form and do not really figure in his text. This suggests that the only real use he could have had for them was in order to build up as accurate and as many sided a picture as possible. Orme in fact, had quite extensive powers of observation and he gathered information from all types of sources. For example, some of his material on the "Manners and Customs of India"[76] were drawn from the Court Martial proceedings of a sepoy, who had murdered his wife, his brother's wife and a slave, as a punishment for their adultery. It was characteristic of his methods that he treated even such unlikely material with great care. Although most of his material was in English, it is clear from his contacts with Bussy and his frequent use of French documents that Orme worked from French fairly easily. What he clearly did not have was any knowledge of Persian, hence all his narrative accounts of Indian dynasties had to be culled from European sources. However, as his work was focused mainly on the doings of the Europeans themselves, the **History** does not suffer unduly from this deficiency.

Orme was determined to raise the standing of his subject by applying a proper historical process towards it. This determination was clearly reflected in his meticulous attitude towards his sources. For him accuracy was of paramount importance and he employed the most painstaking methods to ensure the exactness of his materials. Hence he was constantly checking and rechecking his material to make sure that his facts were correct. For example, despite having Dalton's journal with him while he was writing his own account of the Trichinopoli campaign, Orme was constantly in touch with him, asking for additional particulars and clarifications.[77] He remained just as particular even after publication, asking Dalton

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75 OV.332, ff.17-23.

76 OV.6, pp.41-3.

77 OV.15, J.Dalton - Orme, May 2 1763, pp.341-4.

to look over Volume One with care and to let him know if he had made any errors.[78] Orme's meticulous approach was especially evident in the way he handled the material which was supplied to him by Bussy. Bussy had provided him with details of his own operations in the Deccan between 1754-1756. What Orme then did was to make a draft of these activities, alongside which he posed a new set of queries and questions, together with a space for Bussy to make his replies.[79] After having ascertained the exact nature of his facts, Orme then had his contributors read over what he had written from their accounts. As he told his friend Caillaud, he would be very sorry if he had to publish his second volume without Caillaud first being able to peruse what he had written about him.[80] Caillaud he felt, might be able to point out many things which had not occurred to him, and anyway, Orme would not want to write anything which did not convince him.[81] Even after all this, there was one more precaution to come. As a final check, Orme frequently resorted to submitting his material to a third party for verification and final confirmation. Thus, he forwarded an eyewitness account of a sally at the siege of Madras to Richard Smith, who had also been there, for his opinion and confirmation:

> But Pascall's Detail confirms many other points - the Guns in the Rear, Huzzaing acts... I believe at this time, you have much better information of that sally than any three Persons who were on that service.[82]

Orme was also very organised in the way in which he handled his material. Although Orme collected all sorts of information, he was very discriminating in his attitude towards it. Having first collected his material, he then carefully evaluated it and graded it in terms of its usefulness and objectivity. Witness, for example, Orme's remarks on one of his French sources:

> Finished reading this extravagant book and making notes of extracts which are entered in the Book 2, Delhi and Indostan. Some use may be

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78 Ibid. Oct.1 1763, p.356.

79 OV.55, pp.27-43.

80 OV.222, Orme - J. Caillaud, Feb.10 1766, p.125.

81 Ibid.

82 OV.62, R.Smith - Orme, Oct.8 1776, p.75.

derived from this extract - the whole book proves the most violent animosity to the writer Lally and the highest devotion to Pigot.[83]

If he read anything which might be of relevance, he made notes on the major points. Often these were collected in a separate volume, which was then filed away under its relevant subject heading. For example, Orme collected all his different papers on the fall of Calcutta - whether letters, narratives, plans or accounts - and gathered them together under one volume, with the heading "Bengal 1756".[84] These papers were filed away in chronological order, thus providing at the very start, a much more clear cut survey of the progress of events.

Orme had an even more systematic approach to geographical material. As often as not, he tried to build up a complete picture of the particular area in which his narrative was set. This was very evident in the way he assembled his material on the Coromandel Coast. His first step was to compile an alphabetical list of all the plans he had on the forts in the region.[85] This enabled him to see at a glance, the extent of the information which he had acquired on any particular area. He then made a study of all the principal rivers in the area, taking great pains to ascertain the source, the mouth and the course of almost every single one.[86] He followed this up by compiling a list of all the towns on the Coromandel Coast, making a note of the situation of each one and the nature of the commercial or other activities with which they were concerned.[87] As a final step, he also gathered up a list of all the eyewitness descriptions of the area which he could lay his hands on.[88]

Perhaps the most characteristic features of Orme's historical method were his tremendous thoroughness and application. As we can see from his contacts with Bussy and D'Anville, he spared no pains, and was determined to go to any lengths to ensure the correctness of his material. His techniques of research were carefully framed in order to extract the maximum information possible. For instance,

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83 OV.1, p.190.

84 OV.19.

85 OV.65, pp.61-2.

86 Ibid. pp.65-6.

87 Ibid. pp.89-90.

88 Ibid. pp.123-8.

in order to fill the gaps in his knowledge about Bengal, he sent off a skeleton map of the province to Richard Smith.[89] He asked Smith to pass the map around amongst everybody who knew anything of the subject, so that everyone could set down his own particular knowledge. The result, he hoped, would enable him to produce a much better map than had been published so far. Orme displayed a similar attitude in the way he studied his other sources. He took great pains with his authorities, first making comments on the information they contained and brief summaries of the paragraphs in the margin, and finally, as we know, extracting then all into a separate volume.[90] Clearly, the most pronounced feature of Orme's work was the enormous amount of time and labour which he was willing to put into it. This was evident in the way he endured the painstaking and laborious process of trying to obtain the right material for his second volume from East India House.[91] Thus it was hardly surprising that in the end the intensive nature of these methods began to take their toll, both of his health and his determination.

The clinical nature of Orme's methods appears quite distinctive in many cases, especially when we consider that history in the eighteenth century still remained very much a literary field. Unlike many of his contemporaries, for instance, Orme seems to have relied on the interview as a regular means of gathering information. His use of Bussy as a source, for example, was founded largely on interviews which Orme would then write up:

> Oct.10 Visited M. Bussy, he received me civilly and consented to give me explanation concerning my history.
>
> Oct.11 M. Bussy visited me he told me some particulars of the manner in which he conducted himself during the seige of Charmaul.[92]

Orme was also rather unusual in that he made regular use of battle plans and sketches as a means of plotting out and following the course of an action or engagement. These plans were often drawn up for him by soldiers who had actually

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89 OV.222, Orme - R.Smith, Nov.19 1764, p.113.

90 OV.1, pp.1-190.

91 OV.222, Orme - Clive, Nov.21 1764, p.114.

92 OV.55, p.1.

been present at the action. Orme devoted a great deal of his time to studying these sketches and followed them closely in his attempts to understand what happened. Orme's treatment of a sketch of an English attack on the village of Wandewash in 1759, furnishes a very good example of his methods.[93] Orme took the initial sketch and worked it up into a detailed and fully finished illustration, by which he could easily follow all the main phases of the action. It was an extremely comprehensive diagram, not only did it clearly delineate all the major phases of the action, it also established the location of all the natural and man made features, as well as the exact position of each body of troops and their intended line and object of attack. Orme made a similar use of tables and diagrams to help him chart the course of naval actions and engagements. For example, for his account of an action off Fort St. David in September 1759, Orme relied on a diagram which gave the exact position of the two lines at the beginning of the engagement.[94] The diagram showed the picture of each ship and its opposing number, and it was reproduced almost exactly in Orme's printed narrative of the event.[95]

The way in which Orme treated his materials was clearly reflected in the **History** itself. As we said at the beginning, the key to Orme's method lay in the comprehensive nature of his sources. This is very much the case with the text of the **History**, where the highly informed nature of Orme's sources exerted a crucial influence over the course of the narrative. For example, Orme's principal source for the siege and fall of Calcutta was its Governor, Roger Drake. Drake, who was responsible for the defence of the settlement, had fled at the very last minute. Shortly afterwards, in June 1756, he wrote an account of the siege, which he used to try and justify himself.[96] This account he passed on to Orme, who regarded it with the greatest respect and followed it closely. The highly detailed and specific nature of the information provided by Drake enabled Orme to develop a very precise picture of the siege. For example, the exact idea which Orme displayed in his text[97] of the

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93 OV.333, f.24.

94 OV.72, p.87.

95 **History**, vol.2, p.512.

96 Hill, **Bengal in 1756-7**, vol.1, pp.118-62.

97 Ibid. pp.157-8.

location and purpose of the various batteries clearly owed a great deal to Drake, who had already expatiated on them at length in his own account.[98] It was from the on-the-spot observations of men like Drake that Orme derived his recognition of the key phases of the siege. The English decision to abandon their advanced positions at the batteries and retreat inside the fort, for example, was regarded by Drake and many others as a crucial moment:

> This retreat gave everybody no small shock, being sensible how little able we were to defend ourselves in a fort which was from every quarter overlooked by houses.[99]

As a result, Orme too was able to realise the significance of the withdrawal, and his narrative reflected his awareness of its gravity:

> The batteries had been so much relied upon as the best defences of the settlement, that the desertion of them on the very first day they were attacked created great consternation.[100]

Despite his reliance on Drake Orme did not take everything he said at face value. As his rigorous method of scrutinising his sources had suggested, Orme proved himself quite capable of assessing the value and accuracy of his material. Thus although Drake had insisted that he had been preparing for the Nawab's assault for at least a month beforehand,[101] the weight of contemporary evidence to the contrary convinced Orme otherwise, and he was able to discount Drake's assertions:

> In the meantime, as the principal reason assigned for Surajah Dowlah's indignation was his belief that the English were erecting new fortifications, the dread of exasperating him still more, unfortunately deterred the presidency from taking the necessary measures to oppose, until there remained no longer any hopes of appeasing him; and in this precarious suspense, twenty days, in which much might have been done, were suffered to elapse unemployed.[102]

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98 **History**, vol.2, pp.63-4.

99 **Hill, Bengal in 1756-7**, vol.1, p.150.

100 **History**, vol.2. p.68.

101 Hill, vol.1, p.128.

102 **History**, vol.2, pp.58-9.

The meticulous attention which Orme paid to detail was to become a characteristic feature of his literary style. Documents, for example, such as treaties and letters, were not merely summed up or described, but were often cited at length and sometimes reproduced in full. The same tendency was also evident in Orme's description of places, where he seems to have been less concerned with conveying a vivid picture than with emphasising the clarity and precision of his detail. Orme's description of Tanjore in 1749 provides us with a typical example of his approach:

> The kingdom of Tanjore extends about 70 miles from north to south, and about 60 miles from east to west. The river Coleroon bounds to the north; the sea coast, running nearly north and south to the east: to the south it is bounded partly by the sea coast extending east and west, and partly by the country of Morawar: to the west it is limited by the kingdom of Trichinopoly and the country of Tondiman.[103]

The description seems more like a map than anything else, for all it is concerned with is giving details of distance and an exact idea of location; thus it seems to do little more than go through all the points of the compass, merely saying what is to the north, the south, the east and the west. As for the natural features, here too, Orme's account seems to do little more than chart them, merely giving details of the course and their extent.

Without doubt, the precise and exacting nature of Orme's historical method exercised a major influence over the final form of his narrative. Hence the style of writing which characterised the **History** was very much a fact based one which firmly echoed the emphasis which Orme had placed on accuracy, detail and organisation in his original approach.

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103 Ibid. vol.1, pp.108-9.

The History in the Making.

Orme never regarded the **History** as a single, unchanging conception. The drafts which Orme compiled at various stages in his career suggest that he saw it from several perspectives at different periods in his life. The two draft versions of the story of the Carnatic War belong to the very early stages of Orme's career. Both were written while he was still in (or on the way back from) India, with a view to promoting Orme's reputation and advancing his career. They were intended more or less for private circulation within East India Company circles, for there is no evidence that Orme had any plans to publish them at this stage. Indeed, once he had achieved the desired effect and obtained the promotion which he had been angling for, the **History** was, more or less, put aside as Orme plunged himself in to the world of Madras politics. However, this is not to say that he abandoned the work entirely. For, despite his relative inactivity, the **History** remained very much in his mind and he continued collecting material for it.

The final version of the **History**, however, was only written after Orme's return from India and it shows us that he was now operating at a different level. The two early drafts had been full of forthright opinions, colourful characterisations and animated language. However, now he was no longer writing for his own private purposes, Orme's aims were very different. Above all, what he wanted to do now was to create a work of clear, simple narrative history. Hence he sought to write in an unadorned, rather prosaic, manner which he hoped would allow the facts to speak for themselves in classic narrative style. To this end Orme was at great pains to pare down what he regarded as the excesses and superfluities of his drafts.

The draft versions of Orme's second volume are a very different case. By the time he came to write them Orme had already established his credentials as a serious historian, and he no longer felt the need to make so many revisions to his work. Both drafts, however, were deeply affected by the disillusionment and distaste which Orme had begun to feel for the Bengal War. They were full of deeply discreditable episodes, all concerning the avarice, intrigue and corruption which characterised the activities of the British in Bengal. Orme's second volume, when it finally did come out, differed from his drafts in one crucial respect and it evidenced

an entirely new priority on his part. Orme's paramount concern was now with the dignity of his subject. In this cause he made great efforts to rewrite his material, in order to make the events and episodes which he had come across more worthy of his subject. Thus he went to great pains to raise the profile of the events which he was describing and he now took the utmost care to suppress any discreditable revelations.

The revisions which Orme was to make to the drafts of his first volume were mainly those of style and language. They reflect his determination to establish his work on a sound historical basis and to develop a proper historical style. Personal details, for example, were often considered by Orme to be superfluous and he was constantly trying to reduce the role played by individual characters and the attention which was given to them. Speculation on character, he felt, was far too uncertain and unknowable a process to waste time attempting. Thus, between his drafts and the final version, Orme made a conscious effort to try and reduce the element of characterisation in his story.

In the draft version, for example, Orme paid great attention to the character of Mir Assad, who had been appointed by the Nizam of the Deccan as his new Diwan.

> Meerasudalla, the Tutor of Subder Ally in his childhood had besides the affection of that prince, every virtue and gratification necessary to recommend him to that dignity. He was master of all the learning of the east; versed in Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages; was of great application to business and had equal sagacity to conduct it. His talents, and inviolable attachment to his pupil were worthily rewarded by a sudden introduction to this great office of Diwan. Being perfectly acquainted with Chanda Sahib's character he began early to warn Subdar Ally....[104]

By probing into Mir Assad's character and background, Orme manages to build a very lifelike picture of the new Diwan as a loyal and devoted retainer, who had been deservedly elevated to his high office. However, by the time Orme came round to writing the final version, all this had been reduced to the bare minimum. What was

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104 India II, p.344.

a sympathetic and highly evocative portrait is deliberately reduced to a rather flat, one dimensional sketch:

> Subdar Ally .... returned to his father at Arcot, who appointed Meer-Assud, the preceptor of Subdar-Ally, to succeed Chanda Sahib in the office of Diwan. The new Diwan was well acquainted with the ambitious character of his predecessor.....[105]

Orme was also very keen to excise anything in his drafts which might resemble philosophical speculation or reflection. Thus he made no attempt to seek for the origin and cause of events and he took care to eliminate any such discussions from his final text. In his draft version, for example, Orme had examined Chanda Sahib's character in some depth and had traced the effect of ambition as his besetting sin.[106] Chanda Sahib's death had given Orme cause for much reflection. He pondered deeply on the consequences of Chanda Sahib's overbearing ambition, and drew the moral that, in the end, he had only met the same fate which his ambition had meted out to others. His end, therefore, had merely been poetic justice:

> To the various instances which history affords, that providence has often been marked the death of sons of ambition with such circumstances as seem intended to point out a kind of retribution in its vengeance, may be added this of Chanda Sahib.[107]

The published version, however, attached no such special significance to Chanda Sahib's death. Instead his fate is presented merely as part and parcel of the vicissitudes of Indian politics:

> The many examples of a similar fate, which are perpetually produced by the contests of ambition in this unsettled empire, have established a proverb, that fortune is a throne; and therefore he who falls in such contests is only reckoned unfortunate.[108]

Orme's aim was to trim the narrative down to its bare essentials, so that he could focus on the events themselves and keep his story moving. With this in

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105 **History**, vol.1, p.39.

106 India II, p.419.

107 India II, p.418.

108 **History**, vol.1, p.241.

mind, he was constantly editing down the text of his drafts. In his draft version he was to devote more than three pages to describing the arguments and quarrels which broken out between the English and their respective allies when Chanda Sahib fell into their hands. During all this Orme discusses the aims and ambitions of the contending parties, the Nawab, the Marathas, the Mysoreans, the Tanjoreans and the English at some length.[109] Thus he talked of the financial greed which motivated the Marathas, the deep seated fears of the Tanjoreans, who remembered Chanda Sahib's threats against them, and the cunning plans of the Nawab, who aimed to use Chanda Sahib to make peace on his own terms with the Mysoreans. In the final analysis, however, all this was set aside and Orme focused the narrative firmly around the bare facts of the matter: "The Mysorean promised money, the Nawab threatened resentment and Morari Row, more plainly that he would pay him a visit as the head of 6,000 horse".[110]

It was of the greatest importance to Orme that he be regarded as an unbiased and impartial historian. To this end, he went to great lengths to achieve a detached and impersonal effect, which would give the impression that he was allowing the facts to speak for themselves. This, however, was not generally the case with the drafts which he had originally compiled. In these Orme referred to himself frequently and freely voiced his own attitudes and opinions. Thus although he was full of admiration for the French achievement in overthrowing Nazir Jang, he was appalled by the underhand and dishonourable nature of their methods.[111] At the same time he was also deeply suspicious of the French and their ambitions and did not hesitate to say so:

> It is said that Nazir Jang was the open and avowed enemy of Pondicherry. This being so, the previous politicks, which brought on this deed, became the real subject of detestation and these have certainly the air of a plan widely different from the advantages and security of a colony of merchants.[112]

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109 India II, pp.416-18.

110 History, vol.1 p.240.

111 India II, p.379.

112 Ibid.

Pronouncements of this sort, however, have no place in the finished text. Instead of expressing his opinions openly, Orme now contrived to weave them into the narrative. Hence his suspicions of the French were now presented through the medium of Dupleix and his own actions.

> Mr. Dupleix affected to distinguish his new acquisitions, by ordering small white flags to be planted almost in every field to which he laid claim..... and the insolence of these marks of sovereignty stung the English and roused them from their lethargy: they concluded that Mr. Dupleix, from the same spirit of dominion, would not fail to impose extravagant duties on their trade passing through the countries of which he had possession...[113]

Like his great friend and contemporary, William Robertson, Orme was very much averse to imaginative flights of fancy. Like Robertson, he believed that the duty of the historian was to achieve factual exactness and keep close to his authorities. Thus he was content merely to recite the facts and trust to their novelty to supply the dramatic element. Orme, in fact, was to be highly praised by his reviewers for having successfully achieved the true simplicity of the historical narrative.[114] What his drafts show is that he only achieved this by drastically editing down the substance of his early manuscripts and eliminating everything which did not fit in with his idea of historical simplicity. In order to let the facts speak for themselves, the role of the narrative voice was completely eliminated from the final version. The author's own opinions were either phased out or wherever possible fused into the narrative, in order to achieve the correct air of detachment and impartiality. Philosophical speculation of any sort was carefully pruned from the final text and the level of characterisation, too, was methodically reduced. Both it seems, were regarded as equally uncertain, unknowable processes, which conflicted with the purposes of Orme's narrative and threatened to overshadow the facts themselves.

Orme's other great concern was with the nature of his subject matter. Orme, as we know, saw himself as a patriotic historian, who was dedicated to the

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113 **History**, vol.1, p.171.

114 **Monthly Review**, vol.59, 1778, p.432.

commemoration of glorious and resounding military deeds. This however, does not make him an apologist for empire in the conventional sense, unlike his successor as official Historiographer, John Bruce. Bruce was prepared to condone Britain's misdeeds in India on the grounds that they had all been done in the name of conquest. In 1793 he wrote fulsomely of the advantages which British conquest and dominion had brought to the population of the East India Company's new Indian provinces.[115] Orme's view however, was very different in that he was not a blind defender of British interests. The concept of patriotism, which he believed in, was founded on an old fashioned belief in civic virtue. The great military actions which had taken place in India, were for Orme an expression of Britain's vigour and vitality as a politically virtuous society, and it was on these grounds that they appealed to him. He saw them not as wars of conquest but as wars in defence of commerce. Commerce occupied a very important role in Orme's conception of English society. He saw it as a vital element in Britain's position as a free and dynamic 'Republican' society. Thus, to all intents and purposes, the wars in India were not wars of conquest but wars in defence of 'civic virtue.'

As the events of the 1760s have shown, it was absolutely essential to Orme that he be able to believe in his subject. Whereas Bruce was able to rationalise and justify all the unsavoury aspects and implications of conquest, Orme's code of civic virtue made it almost impossible for him to face them. For example, the incidents of cowardice, foul play and corruption, which marked the subjugation of Bengal, were an anathema to his philosophy. If he were to continue writing at all, it was absolutely vital that he be able to suppress, ignore or omit such disgraceful activities. Unlike Bruce, Orme found it impossible to explain them away and absolutely refused to try and celebrate them: "Why should I be doomed to commemorate the ignominy of my countrymen."[116] Hence he went to great lengths to ensure that the deeds which he had to chronicle were indeed worthy of him.

Orme's desire to glorify the deeds of his compatriots inclined him to be far less critical than he had been in the past. Indeed, it appears that Orme

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115 P.J. Marshall, "A Free Though Conquering People: Britain and Asia in the Eighteenth Century." Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Kings College London 1981. p.3.

116 OV.222, Orme - R. Smith, Nov.18 1767, p.167.

consciously modified the effect of many of his criticisms in order not to blame anyone at all. This was very much the case with the very first draft which Orme made of the fall of Calcutta.[117] Written in October 1756, barely four months after the event, this early account closely reflects the trenchant criticisms which were made by many of Orme's witnesses. Following the lead given by his sources, Orme too was critical of the way the defence was conducted. To begin with, he was deeply dissatisfied with the state of the town's defences which were, he felt, woefully inadequate. Hence he described Fort William as "a building which like many an old house in the country exceeds its defences."[118] He was also deeply contemptuous of the efforts of the defenders. Thus he made no attempt at all to conceal the mutiny and drunkenness, which his sources told him were rife among the garrison:

> The soldiery, which were none of the best, had begun to establish their tabernacles in rooms where liquor had been deposited and grew mutinous when called to their duty; that part of the militia which consisted of the English inhabitants and which were the real defenders of the place were jaded to death for not having been marshalled into regular tours of duty.[119]

Like his sources, Orme clearly felt that the whole affair, especially the evacuation of the town itself, had been completely mishandled. "It was necessary to retreat. It was determined to retreat and yet the retreat was not made."[120]

The picture, however, was very different in Orme's final version. Although Orme did admit to certain shortcomings, such as the inadequate number of troops and the structural weakness of the Fort, this was almost in passing. He did not make a major issue of either factor, and certainly came nowhere near advancing them as reasons for the fall of the settlement. There was hardly a hint of the incompetence and mismanagement which had been so vividly emphasised in his sources. Indeed, as far as Orme was concerned, the fall of the town seems to have been almost inevitable and nobody in particular seems to have been to blame. Even

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117 Hill, **Bengal in 1756-7**, vol.3, pp.126-31.

118 Ibid. p.126.

119 Ibid. p.128.

120 Ibid.

the utter chaos of the evacuation was blamed on other factors, such as the panic stricken behaviour of the Portuguese women and children on embarkation:

> The voice of order was lost amongst this affrighted multitude, of which every one pressing to be first embarked, the boats were filled with more than they could carry, and several were overset.[121]

Similarly there was only the barest mention of the indiscipline and poor morale of which Orme had written earlier. Indeed he talked about the resolution shown by the defenders and dwelt on the courage and constancy of their spirit.... "The Armenians and Portuguese militia were stupefied with fear. However the English still preserved their courage."[122]

In accordance with his philosophy, Orme took the greatest pains to suppress any discreditable episodes, which he felt might demean or sully the nobility of his subject. For example, while writing his first draft of the Bengal War, Orme had uncovered evidence of corruption against William Watts, the British agent at the court of Bengal. Watts, he discovered, had been guilty of making overtures on his own behalf to Mir Jafar, with whom the British had been plotting to overthrow Siraj-ud-Daula. Despite his evident distaste for the subject, Orme had no doubt that Watts was guilty and he was determined to expose him:

> It is with regret that we find ourselves obliged to publish a private transaction hitherto concealed or not known to those who have related these events before us ..... It was, we have no doubt, in the first interview with Meer Jaffier's agent that Mr. Watts made the stipulations for his own reward which so strongly influenced his subsequent conduct ....[123]

Orme's second draft however, did not echo the conviction of the first. Whereas previously Orme had been quite explicit in his denunciation of Watts, now he merely implied his suspicions:

> Mr. Watts had done nothing without the advice and assistance of Omichund since their arrival at Murshidabad; but as soon as he received

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121 **History**, vol.2, p.70.

122 Ibid. p.68.

123 OV.164(b), p.58.

> the overture of Jaffier began to hold him in abomination, which obliges us to think that he stipulated for his own private fortune in the very first conference with Petrus.[124]

The final published version though, was even more heavily doctored. By now Watts' actions had been stripped of all their unsavoury connotations and there was scarcely any trace of his malpractice:

> From his own experience of the practices of Indostan, Omichund had no doubt that Mr. Watts would have been amply rewarded by Jaffier, if the revolution had succeeded.[125]

The firmness of Orme's initial convictions makes it quite clear that originally he had been quite certain about his evidence. Thereafter however, Orme appears to have taken a conscious decision to stifle such an ignominious episode, and he began re-editing his work in order to suppress the details. Thus returning to his first draft, he deliberately excised all the details referring to Watts' private deal.[126] Even after all this had been done, the greatest possible care was taken with the subsequent editions to ensure that nothing unsavoury was revealed.

The revulsion which the politics of conquest aroused in Orme led him to focus much more closely on the purely military achievements of the British. As we know, Orme found the war in the Carnatic much more to his taste than the sordid wheeling and dealing which had characterised the British conquest of Bengal. The Carnatic theatre provided a tale of military achievement and endeavour, which in contrast, seemed almost clean and unsullied. The war against the French in the South offered him a field, which for once did not conflict with his values of civic virtue, and Orme revelled in the opportunity. Hence he gloried in the success of the British campaign and exalted them as much as possible. Orme's treatment of the siege of Madras, for example, provides us with a classic illustration of this.

The siege of Madras by the French in 1759 marks one of the culminating points of Orme's narrative. Although we have no draft versions with which to make

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124 OV.164(a), p.72.

125 **History**, vol.2, p.151.

126 OV.164(b), pp.61-2.

a comparison, Orme's published account leaves us in no doubt of his intention to raise the profile of the whole event and highlight the achievements of his compatriots as much as possible. The whole episode is unashamedly contrived to emphasise the fortitude, the resolution and above all, the unity, shown by the English. Hence Orme was at great pains to emphasise the dedication and diligence of their leaders; Governor Pigot for one, who he said was highly esteemed by everyone for the great resolution and activity which he showed during the siege.[127] He also took great pains to bring out how well organised and well prepared the English had been for the siege:

> ... Provisions of all kinds in abundance, and of the best condition had been laid up, and as well as all the military stores, were distributed from the different magazines, under the direction of the members of the Council, assisted by the inferior servants of the company, whose habits of business established and continually preserved the details free of all let and confusion.[128]

Most of all, Orme underlined the great sense of unity and common purpose with which the English resisted the

> .... zeal and constancy with which the garrison had sustained every danger and fatigue; and no men ever better deserved the testimony; for scarce a murmur had been uttered: all was emulation.[129]

He contrasted this with the acrimony prevailing in the French camp, where all the leaders were at each other's throats, where the troops were inadequately supplied and completely demoralised, and where the citizens themselves seemed unwilling to lift a finger to help:

> .... The treasury of the government at Pondicherry was exhausted, and individuals from their distrust and detestation of Mr. Lally would lend none to forward the public cause.[130]

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127 **History**, vol.2, p.457.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid. p.453.

In Orme's eyes the siege of Madras was a heroic achievement, and he went out of his way to present it as a stirring and glorious example:

> Thus ended this siege, without doubt the most strenuous and regular that had ever been carried on in India; and we have detailed it, in hopes that it may remain an example and incitement.[131]

In the final analysis, it was the sense of teamwork, of mutual support and cooperation, which had distinguished the English from the French. It was this, he implied, which had paved the way for their final triumph in India.

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131 Ibid. p.459.

The Critical and Commercial Reaction.

Generally speaking, the critical reception of the **History** was very favourable. Both volumes in fact were very well received. The first volume, especially, made a considerable impact and subsequent work was keenly awaited: "This volume does not carry the war farther than 1755. It were to be wished that the author may finish what he had begun in so promising a manner".[132]
William Robertson was amongst those who was full of anticipation for Orme's second volume. In particular, he looked forward to the way in which Orme would handle the more challenging and infinitely more exciting tapestry of Bengal:

> I long with impatience to peruse this volume. This period will be still more interesting than your former one. The events are greater and more splendid, as well as productive of more important consequences. The subject becomes more worthy of being adorned by your pen.[133]

Volume Two, when it finally did come out, was greeted with, more or less, the same degree of approval. Indeed there seems to have been widespread expectations of yet another volume:

> The transactions recorded in the present publications bring the history down to the month of April, 1761. We have not heard what progress the ingenious author may have made in the farther continuation of this valuable work.[134]

Both volumes attracted a considerable amount of attention in the leading literary journals of the day, where they were subjected to the most rigorous scrutiny. The nature of Orme's material, the manner in which he handled it and his literary style all came in for close analysis. On the whole, however, Orme came through the test with flying colours and he appears to have gone a long way towards satisfying the historical and literary criteria of the day.,

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132 **Annual Register**, Vol.7, 1764, p.256.

133 **Fragments**, p.xxxviii.

134 **Monthly Review**, vol.59, 1778, p.440.

Above all, a historian was expected to have a complete mastery and thorough knowledge of his subject. In this context, Orme's work seems to have met with almost unanimous approval. The **Critical Review** highly commended him for the thoroughness of his work,[135] while the **Annual Register** went even further, observing that no historian seemed more perfectly informed about the subject about which he was writing.[136] The critics were also greatly impressed by the way in which Orme handled his material, especially by the great diligence and industry which he put into his scholarship.[137] In particular, they commented on his painstaking attention to detail, which was widely hailed on all sides as a sign of his scholarship. The precision and accuracy with which Orme described events counted for a great deal in the opinion of his reviewers. In their eyes, it went a long way towards establishing his credibility as a serious historian:

> A great variety of facts .... are related with an air of simplicity, and with a minuteness of detail, which ..... are abundantly sufficient to fix the stamp of authenticity on the narrative, and to entitle the Author to the character of a faithful historian.[138]

A work of history was expected to inform and enlighten the reader and to be able to satisfy his curiosity on every aspect. In this respect the great wealth of information and detail which was supplied by Orme stood him in good stead. Thus the exhaustive coverage which he provided satisfied the expectations which had been raised by the widespread interest in his subject:

> The History is illustrated with a great number of plates, and contains so clear and faithful a detail of the transactions in the East Indies as must afford ample satisfaction, in respect of both information and curiosity to such as are interested in these affairs.[139]

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135 **Critical Review**, vol.16, 1763, p.249.

136 **Annual Register**, vol.7, 1764, p.256.

137 **Critical Review**, vol.46, 1778, p.347.

138 **Monthly Review**, vol.59, 1778, p.431.

139 **Critical Review**, vol.46, 1778, p.347.

The number of maps, views and plans which Orme took such pains to include were also a great success; and they were hailed as an important contribution to the clarity and effectiveness of the whole work.[140]

The impersonal and detached tone, which Orme had taken such pains to cultivate, also reaped dividends. Almost all the reviewers were to comment on the detached and impartial stance of the **History**:

> It must be observed, likewise to his honour, that there reigns through the whole work an air of disinterestedness, and of freedom from all passion and prejudice, public or private.[141]

It greatly added to his stature as a historian in the eyes of his critics, many of whom believed that Orme's impartial manner would also greatly enhance the general appeal of his work:

> The facts are related with an air of truth and impartiality, which will undoubtedly give it a due share of weight with the discerning reader and secure it not only a candid but welcome reception, from the public in general.[142]

In an age of conflicting opinions as to how history should be written, the orthodox school of thought was that the historian should aim only at the simple, uncluttered presentation of the truth:

> .... the one great objection in historical writing, is the narration of simple facts, and that every kind of embellishment which in the least interferes with this object, is foreign from the purpose of history, and betrays a degree of unfaithfulness in the writer.[143]

Orme's manner of writing was deemed to conform to this criterion. Hence he was highly praised by the **Monthly Review**, for his success in achieving the true simplicity of the historical narrative.[144] This, in fact, was the general consensus and Orme

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140 **Gentlemans Magazine**, vol.49, 1779, p.252.

141 **Annual Register**, vol.7, 1764, p.256.

142 **Monthly Review**, vol.29, 1763, p.300.

143 **Monthly Review**, vol.59, 1778, pp.430-1.

144 Ibid. p.431.

was widely applauded for his style, which was regarded as the epitome of proper historical writing:

> The author's style is truly historical and his manner classical .... He generally suffers actions to speak characters and he paints them so justly that we see them before our eyes in more lively colours than if they were drawn conclusions of his own.[145]

By the aesthetic canons of his day, Orme's style was thought to be very graceful and refined. William Jones, no less, praised it as a supreme example of literary art:

> As regards the style of writing, if elegant composition consists in the words themselves and in their collocation, your style is exceptionally elegant: the words are very carefully chosen and appropriate to the subject-matter and their arrangement is most attractive.[146]

In an age where literary style was an important guide to merit, this was high praise indeed. The **Gentleman's Magazine**, for example, thought that the classical elegance of Orme's style entitled him to be ranked alongside the best historians of the age.[147] In particular, it was the clear and vivid nature of his narrative which impressed his readers:

> The strategy, action and outcome are so clearly delineated by you that I thought, while reading the book, that I was actually a participant in the events, and not merely reading and imagining them.[148]

Jones was also greatly impressed by Orme's ability to evoke his characters through their actions and his descriptions of natural features:

> I was especially pleased by your description of the doings and characters of men distinguished either by the glory of their actions or by the reputation of their wisdom; but the charm of the narrative is no less

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145 **Critical Review**, vol.16, 1763, p.258.

146 Cannon, **Letters of Sir William Jones**, vol.1, pp.113-14.

147 **Gentlemans Magazine**, vol.49, 1779, p.36.

148 Cannon, vol.1, p.113.

enhanced by the descriptions of important places - for example, the brilliantly drawn passage about the Ganges.[149]

Orme also benefitted from the fact that he was writing about a subject with which the public at large was not very familiar. As such, much of his work had a fresh and novel appeal. "Before this history appeared, we seem to have been entirely in the dark, with regard to the great and important events it contains."[150] In the eyes of many, the most original aspects of the first volume were the first two books. These went into the state of Indian politics in the Carnatic and the Deccan, in the years leading up to the outbreak of war between England and France, and they were regarded with great interest by the reading public.[151] With the second volume, the part which attracted the most attention was Orme's inquiry into the rise and progress of English commerce in Bengal.[152] As Orme had predicted during the long, tedious months of research at East India House,[153] this information proved to be totally new to the public and it was received with great interest.

The only really substantial criticism which was made of Orme's work, concerned his failure to mention the misdeeds of the British. The **Gentleman's Magazine** hinted strongly at the financial malpractice which was rife amongst the Company's servants in Bengal, and the great discredit it had brought to the British name. In the circumstances, the review expressed surprise that Orme had not been more critical and outspoken on this subject.[154] However, it was only the mildest of queries, and in general Orme's conspicuous reticence on the issue of English corruption remained largely unnoticed. The other criticisms which were made all dealt with technical shortcomings. For example, a slight decline in the quality of Orme's literary presentation was noticed in Volume Two; "in the language and forms of expression there appear frequent marks of haste and inattention."[155] There

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149 Ibid.

150 **Critical Review**, vol.16, 1763, p.249.

151 Ibid. p.252.

152 Ibid. vol.46, 1778, pp.241-47.

153 OV.222, Orme - Clive, Nov.21 1764, p.114.

154 **Gentlemans Magazine**,vol.49, 1779, p.254.

155 **Annual Register**, vol.22, 1779, p.188.

were also references to inaccuracies of language and occasional "inelegancies,"[156] and Orme was criticised for his increasing tendency to deviate from the correct and simple literary style which was widely seen as the prevailing character of his work.[157] However, these were not considered to be serious defects, and they were readily excused, given the scope and substance of Orme's work.[158]

As we can see, Orme was evidently accepted as a serious and substantial historian, who was readily excused minor lapses of style. The **Annual Register** likened him to Polybius, for his clear and accurate detail of military matters;[159] while the **Gentleman's Magazine** bestowed upon him the accolade of the "British Thucydides." [160] Both Polybius and Thucydides were widely regarded as the classical role models of eighteenth century historiography. It was a measure of the stature which Orme had acquired in the eyes of the critics, that he too, was now regarded in the same terms. Indeed there seems little doubt that the **History** was greatly esteemed on all sides, both for the value of its subject matter and for the way in which it was presented: "We have few European histories of the same kind which excel this in point of execution and none that equal it in the surprising variety of its events".[161] It was also considered to be a very entertaining work and Orme was widely praised for his ability to combine both scholarship and readability. The **Gentleman's Magazine,** for instance, spoke fulsomely on the scientific and animated qualities of his narrative, with its combination of energy and perspicuity.[162] Thus, critically speaking, the **History** was a considerable success , and Orme seems to have succeeded in satisfying both the historical and literary criteria of the day. Commercially, however, it never seems to have made quite the impact which Orme had expected, and for the rest of his life he was constantly bemoaning its poor sales.

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156 **Monthly Review**, vol.59, 1778, p.431.

157 Ibid.

158 **Annual Register**, vol.22, 1779, p.188.

159 Ibid. vol.7, 1764, p.256.

160 **Gentlemans Magazine**, vol.49, 1779, p.252.

161 **Critical Review**, vol.16, 1763, p.258.

162 **Gentleman's Magazine**, vol.49, 1779, p.252.

However, unlike the Grub Street hackwriters, who wrote in order to survive, Orme did not have to write for a living. He was, to some extent, a man of independent means who could afford to devote time to his scholarship. Although Orme's financial position was never very secure, and he did indeed entertain high financial expectations of his **History**, it was never a purely commercial undertaking. First and foremost, Orme was a gentleman, only then was he a scholar and writer. It is in this light that we must regard the **History** , as the work of an impoverished, but still eminently genteel scholar.

This idea is also borne out by the relationship which Orme enjoyed with his publisher, John Nourse. Nourse was very much a specialist publisher of scientific work and French and German literature. Orme's **History** was completely outside the normal scope of his work. He was also very different from the principal commercial publishers of the day, men like Andrew Millar and John Murray, in that he was very much a gentleman publisher. Educated at Oxford, cultured and of some intellectual repute himself, Nourse was clearly a cut above the ordinary run of publishers, more of an academic, if anything, than a businessman. All this tends to suggest that his decision to publish the **History** was more the result of a gentleman's agreement than a hard edged, commercial undertaking. The close and personal friendship which grew up between the two men also infers much more than a purely commercial arrangement. It was also a very long term relationship, for Orme was to remain with the house even after Nourse's death, when it was taken over by his subordinate, Francis Wingrave. This, too was fairly unusual when judged by purely commercial standards.

The customary procedure in the eighteenth century publishing world was for the manuscript to be sold outright in exchange for a fixed sum.[163] Many of Orme's contemporaries, in fact, received fairly substantial returns on their work in this way. In 1767, Lord Lyttelton received £3,000 for his **History of Henry II**, while in 1769 Dr. Robertson's **History of Charles V** was bought for £4,500.[164] There was, however, no evidence that Orme received any substantial down payment or that he

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163 H. Ransom, 'The Rewards of Authorship in the Eighteenth Century' in **University of Texas Studies in English** (Austin, 1938), pp.46-67.

164 Ibid.

ever sold his copyright. What was more likely, was that Orme had adopted the rather more unusual procedure of contracting for a share of the profits on his work. This was not an entirely unheard of practice in the eighteenth century publishing world.[165] Gibbon, for example, agreed with his publisher for two thirds of the profits on the first edition of **Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,** while Adam Smith contracted for half the profits on the later editions of the **Wealth of Nations.** The keen interest with which Orme afterwards followed the sales of his work, argues very strongly that he had not sold his interest outright. Indeed the way he constantly bemoaned the inadequate sales of the **History** suggests that he too must have been expecting a substantial sum from his share of the profits. Moreover, we must remember that the **History** was also likely to have been a novel undertaking for his publisher, as it was totally outside his normal line of work. In the circumstances, it was highly unlikely that Nourse would have taken so large a risk as to part with a substantial sum of money, in order to buy the manuscript outright. Thus an arrangement to share the profits would have made good sense to both sides. It would have ensured that Orme would not have had to bear the costs of printing and publishing, whilst for the publisher it would have greatly reduced the element of risk and made his a much more limited undertaking.

The figures which Orme quotes in his letters, 780 copies by April 1765[166] and 900 by February 1766,[167] suggest that the **History** enjoyed slow but steady sales throughout his life. However, when compared with the major historical works of the time, these figures do seem rather poor. It is certainly clear that commercially the **History** did not make an instantaneous impact. The first edition of **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,** for example, sold out its entire print run of 500 immediately, and a second edition had to be printed the next day.[168] It was a similar case with Horace Walpole's **History of Richard II** in 1769,[169] whose first

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165 A.S. Collins, **The Profession of Letters, 1780-1832** (1928), p.110.

166 OV. 222, Orme - Clive, 27 April 1765, p.118.

167 OV.222, Orme - J. Caillaud, 10 Feb.1766, p.126.

168 A.S. Collins, **Authorship in the Days of Johnson. A Study of the Relation Between Author, Publisher and Public, 1726-1780** (1927), p.254.

169 Ibid. p.255.

edition of 1200 sold out so fast that another edition of 1000 copies had to be arranged the next day. Orme in contrast, took three years to sell 900 copies; and a second edition was not necessary until 1775, twelve years later. Overall, the number of reprints enjoyed by the **History** - four - was dwarfed by the popularity enjoyed by major historians like Robertson and Hume, Robertson's **History of Scotland,** for example, ran to thirteen editions before his death in 1793, while by 1803, the year of Orme's last edition, Hume's **History of England** had enjoyed twelve editions in London alone. Thus, commercially speaking, we can see that Orme's **History** was not a major success and that despite its critical plaudits, it catered only to a very limited and specialised market. Boswell, for example, although he was aware of Orme's high critical standing, never actually seems to have read the **History** itself. Indeed, it seems that his respect for Orme, to whom he refers on several occasions as that "Able and elegant Historian of Hindostan",[170] was based more on his general reputation than anything else. Like Boswell, the general public also seem to have admired Orme only in the abstract, although they too must have been well aware that the **History** existed. They do not, however, appear to have done much more than this, and it seems that the only people actually to have bought and read the book, were those with an active connection or interest in India.

Within the world of British - Indian history, however, Orme seems to have been pre-eminent. When compared with the other contemporary works on Indian affairs, it becomes obvious that Orme's was easily the most substantial and that it enjoyed the greatest commercial success. The **History** was reprinted four times over a period of time ranging from 1763-1803, almost 40 years. Cambridge's **History of the War in India,** enjoyed a much greater degree of instant popularity and the first two editions were printed in successive years. Thereafter, however, it sank without trace. It was a similar case with Fraser's **History of Nadir Shah,** which was reprinted in successive years, but also went out of general circulation soon afterwards. Orme's work in contrast, continued to retain its appeal over a considerable period of time. Out of all his contemporaries, it was only Dow's work which enjoyed anything like a comparable degree of success. The second edition of his **History of Hindostan** was

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170 J. Boswell, **The Life of Johnson (1776-80)** Ed. G.B. Hill, Revised L.F. Powell (Oxford, 1934), vol.3, p.284.

published barely two years after the first and he, like Orme, remained in demand for quite some time, sharing with Orme four editions over a period of 40 years.

Orme's Place in Eighteenth Century Historiography.

As the reviews of his work suggest, Orme commanded a great deal of respect in the eighteenth century world of letters. We can, perhaps, obtain a better idea of his standing by comparing the critical reputation of his work with that of leading historians of his time. We will begin, first of all, by comparing Orme with the other British-Indian writers of his day.

Volume One had come at a time of growing public demand. The subject of India was just becoming fashionable and the **History** was part of a spate of works by British writers, which had been written to capitalize on the growing public demand. The first major work on the East India Company was the account, thought to be written by John Swinton, in the **Modern Universal History**. Like Orme's work, which was written three years later, Swinton's account was greatly to benefit from the air of novelty and freshness which surrounded the subject. Published in 1759, it was warmly received for being, "The first copious and regular history of the English and Dutch India Companies, that has ever appeared in our language."[171] Swinton's account focused on the history of the two companies, from their origin right down to the present day, ending with the final defeat of Siraj-ud-Daula. He covered much the same ground which Orme was later to range over; indeed, he also dealt with some subjects which Orme did not cover - thorny issues like misgovernment and misconduct within the Company.[172] Despite this, Swinton's work was seen to suffer from a serious drawback, in that it was widely felt that the materials at his disposal were quite inadequate for the task. The sources which he had to rely on , a series of detached pieces, general accounts and "lame" voyages were a grave shortcoming in the eyes of the critics, who noted "the want of proper materials for compiling a full, just, and accurate history of our expeditions into Asia."[173]

Orme's nearest rival, would seem to have been Richard Owen Cambridge. Cambridge, as we know had very similar aims to Orme, and his **History of the War in India** covered almost exactly the same ground. However, his work was never

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171 **Critical Review**, vol.8, 1759, p.261.

172 Ibid. p.269.

173 Ibid. p.262.

considered to have been in the same league as Orme's. It was not really thought of as a proper work of history and was hardly regarded as anything more than a compilation. Unlike Orme, it was widely felt that Cambridge had very little to say which was either original or novel.[174] Indeed a great deal of his material was felt to be of second-hand importance and highly derivative, as well as being quite out of date.[175] The author's historical method too was heavily criticised by his contemporaries. It was widely felt that Cambridge was not very discriminating in his approach and that his whole attitude was, in fact, very un-historical. The **Monthly Review,** for example, felt that the whole work was characterised by a marked lack of critical faculties:

> An ill-natured Critic might suggest, that he was determined to write even without proper materials, and even the most candid may infer, from his confessed eager desire for further inquiry on this subject, that he was ever open to receive information, not over nice in the choice of his informers and desirous of communicating all he knew.[176]

Cambridge's lack of discrimination had serious repercussions for the perceptions of his literary style, which also came in for a great deal of criticism. In marked contrast to Orme's case, the general opinion was that he could neither deal with the mass of information which he had accumulated nor present it in an interesting form.[177] Hence his narrative was bogged down by a sheer weight of detail, which often made reading unbearably tedious:

> We are next presented with a tedious specification of the proceedings of the Commissaries at Sadras, appointed to determine the disputes between contending powers .... This takes up forty six pages of very small print.[178]

His work was also taken to task for a serious lack of clarity. Cambridge's failure to explain himself on many occasions meant that his narrative was frequently very

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174 **Monthly Review,** vol.24, 1761, p.256.

175 **Critical Review,** vol.2, 1761, p.348.

176 **Monthly Review,** vol.24, 1761, p.255.

177 Ibid. p.256.

178 Ibid. p.255.

difficult to understand. The end product, as a result, was found to be far too specific for the public at large and it was felt that it was only really of any use in specialist military circles:

> .... as our Author professes to write for the entertainment of the Many, an explanation of the military terms in his diary would have been equally necessary, as it is to be feared, without some such help, it will not be very intelligible to many, except military readers.[179]

Thus, as a historian, there was very little doubt that Cambridge was considered to have some very serious flaws - much of his material was secondhand, his historical approach, too, was highly suspect, while even his powers of communication left a great deal to be desired.

John Zephaniah Holwell was another of this early breed of Indian historians. He brought out his work in 1765, entitled **Interesting Historical Events, relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan.** This was a history of East India Company affairs in Bengal, combined with a study of the historical and cultural background. Holwell's account was not taken seriously as a work of history and he too was mercilessly lampooned for his unscientific historical methods.[180] He was criticised most of all for his failure to back up his statements:

> If an author's appearing to write with a thorough conviction of his subject, can add any weight to his argument, or prove any inducement for his readers to be convinced likewise, Mr. Holwell is a complete master of that species of argument; but we apprehend the public will require others, and those too of the most critical nature.[181]

In the eyes of his contemporaries, Holwell had failed quite conspicuously to provide the evidence which would have led to his assertions being taken seriously. This led many people openly to doubt many of his sources. His literary style too was also thought to have been highly improper for a work of history. What was more, it was

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179 Ibid.

180 **Critical Review**, vol.20, 1765, p.145.

181 Ibid., vol.22, 1766, p.341.

couched in such a hackneyed and undignified manner that it seemed to have the effect of lowering the narrative even more:

> the author certainly ought to have supported his narrative with better authorities than a dictatorial style, and reflections that lose all force and dignity in their travels between the closet and the counter.[182]

Indeed, the general consensus was that the whole tone of his writing was very much beneath the dignity of a work of history.[183] As for the subject matter itself, it was felt that Holwell had very little to offer which was either new or interesting. "To conclude, we cannot think that the public stood in any need of the information contained in the volume before us."[184]

Alexander Dow's **History of Hindostan** offers perhaps the most interesting comparison. As a translation from the Persian, Dow's work belongs in a very different context to Orme's. On a strict historical basis however, as a British historian writing on India, both critically and commercially it appears that Dow was Orme's nearest rival. Like the **History**, Dow's subject matter attracted a great deal of interest, while the narrative too was widely considered to be vividly and elegantly written:

> It abounds with a variety of interesting incidents, which are narrated with a strength of imagination and elegance of language that has rarely been equalled.[185]

However, two major failings were noticed in Dow's work. The first was his literary style. This did not conform to the body of opinion which held that a sober, restrained and relatively unadorned style of writing was the most appropriate one for historians to adopt.

> If this performance has any essential fault; it seems to be a profusion of ornament, which would better suit the fables invented by romance than facts recorded by real history.[186]

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182 Ibid., vol.20, 1765, p.149.

183 Ibid.

184 Ibid.

185 **London Magazine**, vol.41, 1772, p.241.

186 Ibid.

The other criticism concerned the actual substance of Dow's work and suggested a major drawback in his scholarship. Given his linguistic talents, it was felt that Dow could have done very much better. In the opinion of his reviewers, there were other, far superior Oriental authors, on whom he could have focused or at least taken into account.[187]

Of all his contemporaries, Orme appears to have been the only British - Indian historian not to have met with any substantial criticism of his work. Even Alexander Dow, Orme's nearest rival commercially, had serious questions asked about the style and substance of his work. As for Orme's place in the wider world of eighteenth century letters there were, for example, strong parallels between the response to Orme's work and the critical reaction which greeted the work's of such giants as Hume, Robertson and Gibbon. Indeed, many of the virtues for which Orme was applauded were equally celebrated in the greatest historians of the day.

William Robertson's work, for example, was widely praised for its exacting historical method. In the eyes of the critics, the highly critical, accurate and detailed manner in which he approached his facts, provided the ideal example of a historian dealing with a specific subject:

> If an historian chooses for his theme some particular and more confined period, it will be expected, that he should descend into a more full detail of incidents and characters, that he should examine dubious facts with a more critical eye and discuss them with more accuracy.[188]

It was along these lines that Orme's work was assessed and he too passed the test with flying colours. Robertson's complete mastery over his subject was also a major factor in his historical reputation. He too, was highly praised for having the fullest possible knowledge of his subject: "Our author's industry in procuring all possible information relative to his subject deserves much commendation."[189] There was a great admiration for the easy and sure handed control which Robertson seemed to exercise over his material,[190] much of which found an echo in the glowing

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187 **Critical Review**, vol.26, 1768, p.183.

188 Ibid. vol.8, 1759, p.90.

189 **Annual Register**, vol.20, 1777, p.216.

190 Ibid. vol.2, 1759, pp.489-90.

comments on Orme's narrative. The parts of the **History of Scotland** which attracted the most attention were the unfamiliar and novel areas. The originality of Robertson's work formed a major part of his appeal in the eyes of the literary public. Indeed, the **Monthly Review** went so far as to comment that "With such materials, perhaps a writer with less power of animation, might have succeeded in engaging the reader's attention."[191] Orme in fact, could have been that "writer." Although Orme was never in Robertson's class as a historian, such was the importance which was attached to original material that his work, too, was also considered to be of great value by the critics.

Despite the great disparity in their style and in their philosophy, many of the comments which were passed on Gibbon's work were very reminiscent of those which had been made about Orme. Orme's ability to combine scholarship and readability was a quality which came to be greatly celebrated in Gibbon.[192] Though their styles were in fact quite different, like Orme's, Gibbon's literary style came to be highly regarded for its elegance and its clarity, and it was considered fully worthy of the dignity of his subject: ".... his style is well suited to the dignity of his subject - elegant, perspicuous and manly. The arrangement of his materials ... is clear and distinct".[193]

In the eighteenth century literary world, however, the highest praise of all was reserved for the philosophical historian, who could combine the appropriate style and subject matter with a study of the cause and origin of events. It was this combination which gave Robertson's **History of America** (1777) its extra dimension and added immeasurably to its meaning and significance:

> whilst the majesty of history is blended with the truth, philanthropy and discernment of philosophy, the whole is enriched and beautified with a manly and flowing elegance.[194]

It is this which puts the limitations of Orme's approach sharply into perspective. Whereas Hume, Robertson and Gibbon were all hailed for their original ideas and

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191 **Monthly Review**, vol.20, 1759, p.193.

192 **Annual Register**, vol.19, 1776, p.236.

193 **Monthly Review**, vol.54, 1776, p.189.

194 **Annual Register**, vol.20, 1777, p.216.

profound way of thinking, Orme's work was judged purely on the merits of his material and the way in which he handled it. His refusal to combine history with philosophy denied Orme a place in the first rank of eighteenth century historians and placed him firmly in the second. Of all the early historians of British India, Orme enjoyed far and away the most considerable literary reputation. The evidence, such as it is, suggests that commercially too, Orme was also the most successful. Overall however, the **History** lacked the sheer range and level of perception necessary to free it from the confines of the "Anglo - Indian" world and propel it onto the larger stage. Thus it remained essentially the same work which Orme had set out to write back in 1752, a limited and highly specific work, addressing itself to a highly specialised audience.

Chapter VIII

Orme the Orientalist.

Orme's researches and writings on India were considerable. They included several essays and dissertations on Indian culture and society, a full scale work on late Mughal and Maratha history, and various geographical researches. In addition, Orme was to collect a vast body of information, papers and manuscripts, all on the subject of India and the Far East, while his **History** too, involved him in a considerable study of the Indian background. In the eyes of Edward Said, an orientalist is:

> Anyone who teaches, writes about or researches the Orient - and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, historian or philologist - either in its specific or general aspects.[1]

Orme's assorted essays, books and maps on India place him firmly within this context. Thus this is how we will study all his various researches and writings, as a single body, under the general theme of Orientalism.

Orme's earliest writings on India were his two long essays, on "A General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan" and "The Effeminacy of the Inhabitants of Indostan". The first essay was written in 1753, while Orme was still in India. The second, however, was written almost a decade later in 1761, quite some time after Orme had left India for the last time. Both essays were to remain unpublished during Orme's lifetime; indeed it was not until 1805, when they were issued along with the second edition of the **Fragments,** that they were finally published. When we look at these writings we must bear in mind the effects of Orme's early reading, which revealed little, if any, acquaintance with Oriental history at all. As was shown in chapter one, this was in sharp contrast to the young Edward Gibbon, who had read widely and voraciously in the field of Oriental history by the time he was sixteen.[2] Although Orme was later to build up a very sizeable collection of Oriental books and manuscripts, at this stage in his career his outlook was very

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1 E.W. Said, **Orientalism** (লণ্ডন), p.2.

2 E. Gibbon, **Memoirs of My Life,** Ed. B. Radice (Harmondsworth, 1984), p.72.

much moulded by the literary and historical currents of eighteenth century Europe. Not surprisingly, it was this influence which dominated his early writings on India.

The first essay, a "General Idea of the Government and People of Indostan",[3] was divided into three parts. The first section dealt with the government, administration and social structure of Indian society. The second section discussed at length the differing character of the Hindus and the Muslims, while the third investigated the various processes of criminal and civil justice. Along with the limited nature of Orme's reading, there were also considerable limits to what he could actually have seen. Although by 1753 Orme had managed to spend several months in Madras his actual experience of India could not have included much more than Bengal and Calcutta, where he had been based almost continuously since his arrival from England. Even within Bengal, it is doubtful whether his junior position and mainly commercial duties would have allowed him all that much freedom to travel. In the absence of any extensive first-hand experience, Orme's image of India was largely dominated by the intellectual framework which he had brought with him. On occasion, however, this image was challenged by the reality which Orme had actually had experienced; but in the absence of any real knowledge with which to assess these contradictions, Orme only found himself falling back on yet another aspect of his theoretical framework.

Many of Orme's opinions had their origin in the travel literature of the seventeenth century, such works as Edward Terry's **A Voyage to the East Indies** and François Bernier's **The History of the Late Revolutions of the Empire of the Great Mogul.** For example, Orme's appreciation in his essays of the great wealth of Bengal, "the most fertile of any in the universe",[4] came out of a well established tradition. Edward Terry, writing in 1622, also saw Bengal as the richest territory of all. He described the province as abounding in all the necessities required to feed, clothe and enrich man,[5] an image which was to be strongly echoed in Orme's own description. Similarly, Orme's representation of the gentle, harmless nature of the Hindus and

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3 **Fragments**, pp.397-454.

4 Ibid. p.404.

5 F. Van Aalst, "The British View of India 1750 - 1785." (University of Pennsylvania Ph.D, 1970), p.29.

their belief in "metempsychosis", was also a stereotype which was common to many travellers' accounts. It was also generally accepted by many of these travellers that India provided a prime example of the effects of despotism. It was Terry in fact, who first gave voice to Orme's assertion that there were no written laws and that everything revolved around the emperor.[6] Like Bernier before him,[7] Orme too came to believe that there could be no great progress in the arts and sciences in such a despotic and oppressive environment.[8] Both Terry and Bernier strongly criticised Indian society for being static and lacking in any real dynamism,[9] and this too was to become a major factor in Orme's analysis.

The most important influences on Orme's essays were the writings of the Enlightenment, especially the theories of despotism and climate enunciated by Montesquieu in his **L'Ésprit des Loix.** Orme's analysis of Indian society was to proceed along the classic lines of Montesquieu. He presented India as the perfect case study of a despotic society, whose maxims had a corrosive, corrupting influence on every aspect of the life of its citizens. One of Orme's principal themes in his examination of the nature of government in India was the instability of despotic power. This, he emphasised, was particularly pronounced in India where, despite the despotic power of the emperor, the vast extent of his domains meant that he often had only the most minimal control of his subjects.[10] The effects of despotism, he concluded, were thus rendered even more oppressive in India because of the lack of central control.[11] However, Orme was struck by the contrast between his theories of an oppressive regime and the reality which he found in Bengal, of the populous and apparently flourishing condition of the natives:

> Where the human race is struggling through such mighty ills such as render its condition scarcely superior to that of brutes of the field; shall we not expect to find throughout Indostan, dreary plains, lands

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6 Ibid p.31.

7 François Bernier, **Travels in the Mogul Empire AD 1656 - 1668.** (1891), p.228.

8 **Fragments,** p.406.

9 Van Aalst, "British View of India", pp.44-45.

10 **Fragments** p.397.

11 Ibid. pp.399-400.

> uncultivated, miserable villages ....thinly interspersed..... On the contrary we find a people equalling if not exceeding in numbers the most populous states, such as enjoy the best of governments and the best of laws.[12]

Despite the evidence of his own eyes, Orme lacked the knowledge to analyze the subject further. Thus he explained the discrepancy by drawing on another of Montesquieu's theories, the effect of the climate. This, in his eyes, was responsible for counteracting the violence of the government, by providing all the basic necessities of life with the minimum labour.[13]

Orme's own commercial preoccupations led him to make a particularly careful analysis of trade and manufacture. He took great pains to emphasize the importance of Bengal which, by its situation and manufactures, had the most extensive commerce of any province in the Mughal empire, supplying not only the local but the international markets of Arabia and Persia. It was the area where the Europeans had invested most heavily, and Orme was only too conscious that this put them in a very vulnerable position.[14] In particular, Orme's study focused closely on the cloth and cotton trade, with which the East India Company and he himself were closely involved. Although he drew most of his references only from Bengal and the Coromandel Coast, such was the strength of his convictions that Orme had no doubt that cloth manufacture formed the principal occupation of more than half the population of India.[15] This appraisal was largely influenced by Montesquieu's ideas on climate. Following these, Orme argued that as the sun was too hot to admit any really robust form of activity, the Indians had to find an occupation which was more fitted to the weakness of their bodies; spinning and weaving therefore provided the easiest task to which a man could be set.[16] Here again, the stranglehold of despotism emerged to inhibit the energies of the craftsmen and limit the extent of his production. As Orme saw it, the fear that his labours would draw too much attention to him, resulting either in the seizure of his person or his property, acted as a

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12 Ibid p.407.

13 Ibid. 407-8.

14 Ibid. p.416.

15 Ibid. p.413.

16 Ibid. p.412.

powerful deterrent for the craftsman or the labourer.[17] Thus the spirit of competition and emulation and the desire for excellence, both essential features behind the eighteenth century's idea of progress, were missing in Bengal. It was to the undermining of these productive energies that Orme implicitly attributed the problem of insufficient cultivation in Bengal. It was for this reason that Bengal, for all its remarkable fertility, still remained prone to famine, for "no part of the province is cultivated in proportion to the wants of the inhabitants who reside on it."[18]

Orme's observations on the legal and judicial system were again founded on the basic premise that law and justice could not properly exist in a despotic society. "A government depending upon no other principle than the will of one, cannot be supposed to admit any absolute laws into its constitution."[19] What laws there were, were derived almost entirely from custom and religion.[20] The two principal components of Indian law, as Orme saw it, were those areas which dealt with commerce and inheritance. Here again, Orme found himself confronted by the contradiction between theory and reality. Despite his conviction that, according to the dictates of absolute power, the ruler could inherit the property of anyone in his kingdom, Orme found himself having to admit that this was not the practice in Bengal.[21] He attributed this discrepancy to the influence of custom, which together with religion, acted as a check on the ruler's ambitions in India.[22] From his early vantage point, Orme was well aware of the existence of native forms of justice, which he would have come across in the course of his daily duties in Calcutta. Thus he observed at first hand the functioning of the Kotwal, the equivalent of the civil magistracy which operated in every town.[23] However, it was not until after the translation of Hindu and Muslim legal treatises during the Hastings era, that it really

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17 Ibid. p. 405.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. p. 437.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid. p.439.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid. pp.452-3.

began to emerge that India had an ancient legal system, with highly developed and elaborate provisions for both commercial litigation and the inheritance of property. Hindered by his lack of real knowledge, Orme had no option but to fall back on his original premise that as law and justice could not exist in an abnormal society, what justice there was could only exist in a corrupt and debased form: "It may be objected, that the strict attention given to the forms of justice in Indostan, appears inconsistent with the nature of a government acknowledged to be despotic."[24] As such, the only real considerations which mattered were the "wealth, the consequence and the interest" of the party.[25]

Montesquieu's theories on climate also formed the principal influence on Orme's other essay, on the "Effeminacy of the Inhabitants of Indostan." Many of Orme's conclusions followed Montesquieu very closely in reasoning that physical strength and temperament were very much determined by climatic factors:

> The texture of the human frame in India, seems to bear proportion with the rigidity of the northern monsoon, as that does with the distance from Tartary; but as the northern monsoon heats are felt at the very foot of Mount Caucasus, intense as in any part of India, very few of the inhabitants of Indostan are endowed with the nervous strength or athletic size, of the most robust nations of Europe.[26]

Montesquieu went on to enunciate that this delicacy of physique and fibre among Eastern peoples was accompanied by a degree of mental enervation, which made them incapable of, or at any rate highly resistant to, change. This, said Montesquieu, was the reason that, "the laws, manners and customs.... are the same to this very day in eastern countries as they were a thousand years ago."[27] This idea carried a great deal of weight with Orme, who saw very little change amongst the natives of India. Despite the constant influx of invaders from the surrounding nations, it seemed to him that the natives of India still retained their original characteristics.[28] To back

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24 Ibid. p.447

25 Ibid. p.445.

26 Ibid. p.462.

27 Baron de Montesquieu, **The Spirit of the Laws**, Translated F. Nugent (1750), vol.1, p.322.

28 **Fragments**, p. 458.

up his conclusions, Orme used the evidence of later contemporary authorities, such as the French traveller, Jean de Thévenot and the geographer D'Anville. As further proof, he quoted a description given by Diodorus Siculus of an Indian woman who had burnt herself with the corpse of her husband, who before her death distributed her ornaments amongst her friends and relations. Of this episode he remarked:

> One would think that the description of these ornaments, and of the alacrity and spirit with which this woman sacrifices herself, was wrote yesterday. It is not probable that any great changes can have been introduced among a people, who have preserved for two thousand years, a custom which so strongly revolts the first feelings of humanity.[29]

Such enduring changelessness, he observed, was especially the preserve of the Hindus, who were the original inhabitants and retained the strongest marks of a common character or identity.

Orme's philosophical and practical observations led him to conclude that as a rule, the physical capacity of the Indian was very much inferior to that of the European. Two English sawyers, he observed, could perform in one day the work of 32 Indians.[30] This lack of strength, however, was compensated for by a much greater degree of suppleness and dexterity, which enabled the Indian to work for a long time at his own pace. Although Orme did recognise certain exceptions to this rule, these were confined to the inhabitants of the mountain ranges and wooded areas, where once again Montesquieu's environmental theories came into play.

By this time, although Orme's actual experience of India was now much greater than it had been in 1753, it had yet to proceed any further than Bengal and Southern India. These then were the areas he had in mind when he spoke of the debilitating heat of the climate and its enervating effect on the natives. It was a similar case with the examination which Orme made of Indian eating habits. In his observations, Orme noted the great wealth and variety of fruit and vegetables which lay at the disposal of almost every native.[31] This led him to conclude that the

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29 Ibid. p.459.

30 Ibid. p.463.

31 Ibid. p.470.

Indian, incapable as he was of hard physical labour, rarely ran the risk of being famished. It provided a good example of how in India, the effects of the environment served to supply the native with an abundance of all he needed.[32] Not only did the environment furnish all the necessary food, it also provided all the necessary building materials in the form of bamboo, palm and coconut trees; while the climate made clothing quite unnecessary. All this, Orme emphasised, entailed only the most minimal degree of labour. The resulting effect of this was to heighten the naturally weak and feeble condition of the Indian to an almost unprecedented degree, thus providing the classic illustration of Montesquieu's theory of climate:

> Breathing in the softest of climates; having so few wants and receiving even the luxuries of other nations with little labour, from the fertility of their own soil; the Indian must become the most effeminate inhabitant of the globe and that is the very point at which we now see him.[33]

Clearly Orme could only have been speaking of Bengal, with its great humidity and lush fertility. Northern India, the Punjab and the near deserts of the Deccan plateau, which had yet to be incorporated into British writing, would all have provided him with a very different perspective.

Orme's perception of Muslim rule in India was also very much affected by these climatic theories. He saw India's Muslims as an alien, ruling minority, composed of Tartar, Arab and Persian invaders whose vigour and courage had been sapped by the enervating climate.

> A licentiousness and luxury peculiar to this enervating climate, have spread their corruption, and instead of meeting with obstacles from laws or opinions, is cherished as the supreme good to the utmost excess.[34]

Montesquieu held that the morals which governed human behaviour became more and more relaxed the nearer they approached to the warmer climes of the south. The constant virtues and vices of the temperate zones gave way to the most unbridled and passionate excesses of the south.[35] For Orme, the Muslim rulers of India

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32 Ibid. p.471.

33 Ibid. p.472.

34 Ibid. p.423.

35 Montesquieu, **The Spirit of the Laws**, vol.1, p.320.

provided a perfect example of this theory. By and large, they formed an image which was characterised by sensual excess and unbounded thirst for wealth and power. Remarking on their dominating insolence to their subjects, Orme also accused them of uncontrollable wilfulness and cruelty.[36] In his observations on their political habits, Orme was shocked by the level of deceit, dissimulation and treachery which lay beneath their polite facade. Indeed, it was in his remarks on this that his opinions most closely echoed those of Montesquieu:

> Where morality has no check upon ambition, it must form the blackest resolutions; and the dissimulation necessary to carry these into execution, will amongst a people circumstanced as I described them, be carried to excesses, which different manners and better morals will scarcely imagine human nature to be capable of.[37]

The strength of Orme's convictions also reflect the greater experience of Muslim India which he had gained during his time on the Madras Council. During these years Orme travelled fairly widely throughout Southern India on various diplomatic missions. As a result, he had come into close contact with several of the Muslim courts of the South, such as the court of Mysore, the court of Murtaza Ali at Vellore and of course the court of the Nawab of Arcot. Orme's impressions at the time had been none too favourable, and Montesquieu's theories only served to define his experiences more clearly.

Orme's depiction of the Hindus was a similar mixture of received knowledge and personal experience. He inherited from the travellers' accounts his knowledge of Hindu religious beliefs and his impressions of their mild and affectionate character. These were to some extent reinforced by Montesquieu's ideas as to the effects of climate, which, Orme had no doubt, exercised just as enervating an influence on the Hindus as it had on the Muslims. Orme's responsibilities as a Company servant and his own interests as a private trader would also have given him considerable experience of Hindus on a day-to-day level. Thus he observed that, although mild and affectionate in their private life, in the arts of business, commerce

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36 **Fragments**, p.423.

37 Ibid. p.429.

and administration the Hindus were indefatigably industrious and quite rapacious.[38] As with the Muslims, Orme's personal experience of Hindus did not lead him to draw many favourable conclusions. On the whole, he characterised them as being renowned for their trickery, ingratitude and lack of generosity. It was on this basis that he evaluated Hinduism, which he felt was nothing more than an elaborate confidence trick.[39] Indeed he found it to be a perfect example of the influence of priesthood over superstition, "if ever superstition produced a universal good, it is in Indostan where we see it the foundation of a universal benevolence."[40] This was, he said, because the Brahmins were content to confine their attention purely to spiritual and religious matters, leaving the affairs of the state to others.

The effect of Orme's first intellectual encounter with India was to strengthen his sense of the cultural supremacy of Europe and reaffirm his own belief in its unique values. Even the virtues of Christianity, he felt, seemed to shine forth like a beacon when contrasted with the round of political and legal mayhem, which seemed to be the norm in a heathen society like India.[41] Orme believed very strongly in the value of liberty, which he regarded as an essential ingredient of a civilised society. For him India provided the classic case study of the

> mighty ills to which the slaves of a despotic power must be subject; the spirit darkened and depressed by ignorance and fear, the body tortured and tormented by punishment inflicted without justice and without measure.[42]

As with Christianity, India provided a salutary antithesis, "a contrast to the blessings of liberty, heightens at once the sense of our happiness, and our zeal for the preservation of it."[43]

Although these essays were never published, they do appear to have had some influence on the way in which later British writers, such as Luke Scrafton and

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38 Ibid. p.431.

39 Ibid. p.434.

40 Ibid. p.433.

41 Ibid. p.454.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

Henry Verelst, came to perceive Muslim power. There were in fact, strong resemblances between Orme's essays and the opinions which were expressed by Scrafton ten years later, in his **Reflections on the Government of Indostan.** Both men viewed Indian Muslims as an alien minority descended from Tartars, Arabs and Persians, both held that the enervating climate of India had drained them of their original energies and that their distinguishing characteristics now were their perfidy and sensuality. Scrafton's impressions were widely disseminated and went a long way towards establishing a stereotype of India's Muslims. Orme, as we know, was well acquainted with Scrafton's work and thoroughly approved of it; while the extremely close and long-standing ties between the two men makes it highly likely that Scrafton too, would have been just as familiar with Orme's work. If this was indeed the case, we can conclude that it was Orme who influenced Scrafton and that it was he who laid the foundation for these later stereotypes.

The next stage in Orme's writings on India came in 1763, with his "Dissertation on the Establishments Made by Mohammedan Conquerors in Indostan."[44] This acted as a preface to the first volume of the **History,** which had come out in 1763. The dissertation was more or less an update of Orme's earlier essays and it included various tracts from them. Orme's use of the dissertation to preface his story of the war in the Carnatic, was an important landmark in the history of Oriental scholarship. It was deeply significant, in that it demonstrated for the first time, a recognition that Britain's activities in India had to be seen against their Indian background.

As for the dissertation itself, it was divided into three sections. The first section concentrated on the Hindus, the second provided a chronology of the Muslim rulers of India, while the third dealt with Muslim law and administration. Orme's impressions of Hinduism suggested little, if any, advance from his viewpoint of ten years ago. By and large, Orme was overwhelmed by what he found to be an incomprehensible and extravagant mass of mythology. Hence his reaction seemed even more confused and impatient than it had in the past.

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44 **History,** vol.1, pp.1-29.

> The history of these Gods is a heap of the greatest absurdities .... Here and there a moral or metaphysical allegory, and sometimes a trace of the history of a first legislator, is discernible in these stories; but in general they are so very extravagant and incoherent, that we should be left to wonder how a people ..... should have adopted such a code of nonsense as a creed of religion.[45]

Orme's evaluation of Hindu scientific knowledge was a purely rationalist one. Like the philosophes, and Gibbon and William Jones after him, Orme held that reason was the sole prerogative of Europe and that the experimental method was unknown in Asia. On this basis he found Hindu scientific lore backward and outdated, crippled by its ignorance of anatomy and its strictures against experimentation by dissection.[46] Not surprisingly, he found the Hindus' knowledge of mechanical skills very rudimentary, so limited in fact, that he was at a loss to explain how the great pagodas had been built.[47] Given Europe's greater familiarity with Islamic culture, Orme clearly found it much more logical to attribute most of the architectural innovations to the advent of the Muslims "It does not appear that they (the Hindus) had ever made a bridge of arches over any of their rivers, before the Mahommedans came amongst them."[48]

Indian arts and crafts too were judged from a standard European viewpoint and subjected to classical canons of interpretation. Orme found himself forced to admit the scale and achievement of Indian craftsmanship; "the arts which furnish the conveniences of life have been carried by the Indians to a pitch far beyond what is necessary."[49] Impressive and decorative though they were, Orme's classical inheritance led him to conclude that there was still something lacking in the work of these craftsmen. For all its display, Indian craftsmanship, he felt, was still lacking in the essential artistic virtues:

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45 History, vol.1, p.3.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid. p.7.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

> At the same time no ideas of taste or fine design have existed among them: and we seek in vain for elegance in the magnificence of the richest empire of the globe.[50]

Orme's attitude typified the Western response to Indian art in the eighteenth century. For all his Oriental scholarship Gibbon, too, was to hold that the eastern authors lacked the temperate dignity of style, the graceful sense of proportion and the combination of the visual and intellectual virtues of the classics.[51] It was a perception that was to remain more or less unchanged until the end of the century, when William Jones began his researches into Hindu civilisation.

The second section, in which Orme summarised the Muslim conquest of India and gave a chronology of its rulers, contained little, if any, original scholarship at all. Orme in fact hardly consulted a single new source and most of his information was derived from the established authorities, like D'Herbelot's **Bibliothèque Orientale** and Fraser's **History of Nadir Shah.** Yet despite this, his work had great significance for the history of later Oriental scholarship, for Orme did not confine his interest purely to Mughal India. Since all Indian Muslims appeared to him to be the predecessors of the British, Orme now looked much further than just the era of Tamerlane and the Mughals, going all the way back to Mahmud of Ghazna and his conquest of India in the eleventh century. In doing so, he marked the extension of interest from the Mughal to the pre-Mughal past. Thus he set a new direction to previous scholarship, which had viewed pre-Mughal Muslim history either as isolated episodes in the history of Arabs and Turkish expansion or as part of the excursions of a Genghis or Timur into the subcontinent.[52]

By taking this new standpoint, Orme was able to point to several major gaps in the knowledge of India's Muslim dynasties. He drew attention to a gaping hole in the knowledge of Muslim rule in the fourteenth century, after the end of the Delhi Sultanate.[53] He was also able to underline the prevailing state of ignorance which existed about Timur's successors until the time of Babur:

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50 Ibid.

51 J. S. Grewal, **Medieval India: History and Historians** (Amritsar, 1975), p.23.

52 Ibid. p.5.

53 **History**, vol.1, p.12.

> A few scraps detached from one another by considerable intervals of time, and by subjects of little connection with each other, would be of little use to guide us through such a length of obscurity as that in which we view the history of Tamerlane's successors in India until the time of Sultan Babr.[54]

Thus despite his lack of original scholarship, Orme was still able to make an important contribution in delineating and demarcating the horizons for future scholarship. It was a function which he was very much aware of, and all the signs suggest that he deliberately set out to encourage further study and research.

The third and final section of Orme's essay dealt with Muslim law and administration, and attempted to describe the policies which the Muslims had devised for ruling India. This however, did not mark any substantial advance from Orme's standpoint of a decade earlier, that there were no written laws, only a few maxims transmitted by tradition. Once again Orme's personal experience did lead him to recognize some exceptions, for example, he observed that in some parts of India frequented by Europeans there did seem to be some form of legal land tenure. However, as before, he seemed to suggest that this was a contradiction to the pattern more than anything else.

The rest of the **History** followed the pattern which had been set by the introductory dissertation. Thus, throughout both volumes a great deal of attention was paid to the Indian background, against which Orme's military episodes were set. The first volume, for example, was firmly grounded in the history of the Carnatic since 1710, while the second volume also began by describing the historical and geographical background of Bengal. Throughout the whole work,Orme was to display a considerable knowledge of Indian society, and the habits and character of the various groups he encountered, such as the Marathas, the Pathans and the caste Hindus of the South. The opinions of Indian politics and the Indian character, which he had voiced in his earlier essays, however, were still with him. Thus despite his wider knowledge, Orme's conclusions remained more or less the same. Indian politics on the whole was a sordid world of deceit, treachery and cruelty, while most of the

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54 Ibid. pp.16-17.

Indian rulers he depicted were still largely characterised by their avarice, ambition and complete lack of scruples.

On one front, however, Orme's horizons seemed to have widened considerably. This was in his knowledge of Hinduism, which seemed to have acquired a greater degree of depth by the time his second volume had come out. The intellectual vacuum in which Orme had first approached Hinduism had by now been filled by other British writers, such as John Zephaniah Holwell and Alexander Dow. In 1767 Holwell had published his **Interesting Historical Events** which devoted several chapters to "The Religious Tenets of the Gentoos"; while in 1768 Alexander Dow had published his "Dissertation Concerning the Customs, Manners, Language, Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus". Both writers applied to Hinduism the same assumptions which they held about Christianity. Hinduism like all other religions, was held to have an ancient and fundamental set of tenets which were to be found in a set of sacred writings.[55] These doctrines were entrusted to an elite priesthood, which was responsible for their explanation and performance. Both Holwell and Dow argued that Hinduism was fundamentally a monotheistic religion, with an acceptable moral code and a strong belief in the immortality of the soul.[56] They also made a distinction between the inner, purer doctrines of the elite and the profuse, degenerate polytheism, which was practised by the masses. By 1778, Orme was clearly well acquainted with the work of men like Holwell and their opinions. He too, had come to subscribe to the view that there was a fixed body of doctrine in Hinduism which was stated in its sacred writings. Like them, he had also come to believe that present day Hinduism had very little knowledge of its ancient, fundamental tenets, which were now only understood by a tiny minority of the elite.

> The natives of Bengal derive their religion from a code called the Shaster, which they assert to be the genuine scripture of Bramah.....neither understand the language of the original text, which is called the Shanscrit: the very disuse of this language is of the most remote antiquity: it is

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55 P. J. Marshall, **The British Discovery of Hinduism** (Cambridge, 1970), p.26.

56 Ibid. pp.26-7.

preserved only by the Brahmins and understood but by very few even of them.[57]

Despite his considerable knowledge, Orme did not concern himself very much with trying to analyze Indian society. What he had intended first and foremost was to write a work of military history, India itself being merely the background where these events took place. However, he recognised that as a military theatre, India was quite unique, with a set of rules and conventions which was all its own. European tactical conventions and modes of warfare, he emphasised, were clearly unsuited to India. What was most important was the psychological factor, the appearance of success or the appearance of defeat: "there is no country in which the slightest successes and mischances of war weigh so much in the opinions of both friends and enemies, as in Indostan."[58] Right from the very beginning, Orme had come to realise that the military capacity of the Indian powers was very much inferior to that of the Europeans. Together with his appreciation of the strange and peculiar nature of Indian warfare, it formed one of the principal elements in his perception of Indian society in the **History.** Indeed, their military inferiority only served to confirm the stereotypes of the Indian character which he had already developed. Orme's position as an 'Oriental' scholar, as revealed by his dissertations and the assumptions embodied in the **History,** was a conventional mid-eighteenth century one. According to this pattern, 'Enlightened' stereotypes were imposed on his personal observations of Indian society. His last major work, however, appeared in a very different climate.

Orme's last major publication was his **Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire,** which was issued in 1782. This work, as we have already discussed, had its origins in the climate of Orientalist learning promoted by Warren Hastings, and grew out of Orme's own interest in Sivaji and the Marathas. Orme had originally intended to attempt a study of the Mughal empire, from Aurangzeb's time right up to the mid eighteenth century. His principal concern was with the rapid decline of Mughal power during this period, and he aimed to seek out the history of the events surrounding it:

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57 **History,** vol.2, p.5.

58 Ibid. p.226.

> The humiliations to which the race of Timurlane was at this time reduced did not arise from any sudden misfortune, but from a long continuance of misrule, contention, imbecility and incapacity.[59]

His drafts all concerned themselves with the story of the recurrent struggles for the Mughal throne and the growing power of the Empire's neighbours, such as the Afghans and the Sikhs.

However, Orme came to realise that the origins of this decline lay much further back in the reign of Aurangzeb.

> The degradation to which the sovereignty of the Moguls was at this time reduced, in every province of their dominion, proceeded from evils which had been increasing ever since the death of Aurangzeb, and cannot be developed without a general view of his reign, as well as the reign of his successors. This period comprises of one hundred years.[60]

In the circumstances, what was needed was a full scale treatment of the whole period, from the reign of Aurangzeb right down to the present day. This, however, Orme felt unable to do for sheer lack of materials. Thus he restricted the scope of his work to the crucial events of the seventeenth century and gave it the rather modest title of "Fragments:" "We therefore give it apart, and only in the character of Fragments, which the want of more materials disables us from disposing into a more regular form."[61]

These deficiencies, not only in his materials, but also in his grasp of Indian languages, forced Orme to rely almost entirely on secondary sources. Lacking any Marathi or Persian sources, Orme compiled his "History of Sivaji" on the basis of the accounts of the seventeenth century European travellers.[62] This entailed running through the entire gamut of travellers' accounts - French, English and Dutch - and drawing on every one which was contemporary with the rise of Sivaji. By and large it was the French travellers, such as Tavernier, Bernier, Thévenot, Carré, Delon and Père d'Orleans, whom Orme found the most useful and who provided him with

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59 OV.298(a), p.55.

60 **Fragments**, p.4.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid. pp.171-9.

the body of his information. Of all of these, it was Jean de Thévenot's **Relation d'un Voyage fait au Levant** (1665-1684) which most impressed Orme and which he relied on most of all:

> Nevertheless, no relation of this country contains so much and such valuable intelligence, acquired in so short a time ..... He treats of Sivaji to the year 1664, with better information, according to our judgement, than any of the other travellers: and every other mention which he accidentally makes of him affords some light to be relied on, and worthy of attention.[63]

Orme also relied heavily on whatever Company records and materials he could obtain. Indeed given the inadequacy of his other materials, this source often provided him with what little original information he had. For example, it was only from the Company's records that he learnt of the ignominious manner in which Sivaji's successor, Sambaji, was put to death by Aurangzeb. The Company's archives, he felt, would have provided him with much of the information which he was looking for, but unfortunately there were large gaps in the records of this period.[64]

The inadequacy of his materials led Orme to draw very heavily on the existing corpus of printed work on India, thus his references seemed to take in the whole range of existing knowledge.[65] The **Modern Universal History** and Catrou's **History of the Mogul Empire** were amongst those authorities which were cited regularly, together with the works of Chardin, D'Anville, Dow and Anquetil Du Perron. Orme was also aware of the work done by Captain James Kerr, whose **A Short History of the Rise and Rapid Advancement of the Mahrattah State** was the earliest history to be written of the Marathas. Of Kerr's work, Orme merely wrote that he had compiled all his materials before it had been published and that he had changed nothing in consequence, preferring to rest on his own inquiries.[66] This implies that Orme was rather sceptical about Kerr, who claimed to have established

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63 Ibid. p.173.

64 Ibid. p.181.

65 Ibid. pp.473-6.

66 Ibid. p.181.

the existence of an independent Maratha state for 200 years, and saw no reason to question his own conclusions.

The other important ingredient in Orme's approach was the help which he received from the Persian scholar, Charles Boughton Rouse. Rouse had returned to England in 1778, after having held various important judicial and administrative posts out in Bengal. He enjoyed a considerable reputation for his knowledge of Indian political and commercial affairs, as well as being renowned for his Persian scholarship. Rouse's linguistic skills provided a vital medium for Orme's access to whatever Persian materials he could get hold of.[67] He was responsible for supplying Orme with extensive translations from works such as the **Ain-i-Akbari,** the **General** and **Provincial Histories** of Firishta and nearly 200 pages of the **Alamgir - Namah.** It was on Rouse's expertise that Orme depended to evaluate the weakness in his materials and his presentation, writing; "I have compared your copy of Ferishtah with mine, I find it contains all Histories, but in some places it seems to be abridged."[68] Rouse's assistance was of the greatest importance to the whole work, and Orme liberally acknowledged his contribution in his final text.

Despite his great reliance on secondary material, Orme was not totally dependent on his sources. There is little sign that he relaxed his standards of historical scholarship; indeed he seems to have taken great pains to maintain and apply a rigorous critical method to his materials. Orme's description in the **Fragments** of Sivaji's encounter with Aurangzeb, for example, was based on careful reading, comparison and evaluation of the various accounts.[69] He openly doubted the version of the incident which Dow recounted in his **History of Hindostan.** Dow wrote that Sivaji had defied Aurangzeb and incited his wrath but that he had been saved by the intercession of one of Aurangzeb's daughters, who was smitten by Sivaji's good looks and proud demeanour. First of all, Orme pointed out, it was highly unlikely that Aurangzeb's daughter would have felt well disposed to a man who had murdered her father's uncle, Shaista Khan. On the grounds of his other materials,

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67 OV.298(b), C. W. Boughton Rouse - Orme, 2 Jan. 1781, pp.i-ii.

68 OV. 101, Ibid. 6 Aug. 1781, p.81.

69 **Fragments,** pp.193-4.

Orme also felt that it was highly improbable that Sivaji's appearance could have aroused such an emotional response. He also pointed out that according to Thévenot, who was his principal source, Sivaji was not remotely renowned for his good looks. Thévenot, he emphasised, had arrived at Surat the year after Sivaji had plundered it and would have access to many eye witness reports.

Orme had the greatest admiration for Sivaji and his exploits. Under Sivaji's leadership he saw the Marathas as fighting for their own land against an alien Muslim ruling class. Until his time the Marathas had been divided into many groups under different chiefs. It was due entirely to Sivaji's efforts that they owed the unity of their present condition. For there had been no thoughts of confederacy until "Sevagi, a stranger encouraged by his first successes, formed the idea of collecting all the divisions into one state."[70] Such was the measure of Sivaji's achievement, that by the time of his death he had, purely through his own abilities, made himself master of an area which alone equalled most of the kingdoms of India and founded a

> permanent sovereignty, established on communion of manners, customs, observances, language, and religion, united in common defence against the tyranny of foreign conquerors.[71]

Like many other writers of his time, Orme was not especially well disposed to Aurangzeb. The Aurangzeb of Orme's narrative has little or no conception of honour. For example, Orme shows how he was ready to break his word and destroy Sivaji at a moment's notice, even though Sivaji was a guest at his court and he himself had solemnly guaranteed Sivaji's safety. In Orme's eyes, Aurangzeb was also endowed with a fundamental meanness of spirit. He told a story of how during a campaign against the Rajputs of Chitore and Marwar, Aurangzeb's favourite wife was captured by the Rana of Chitore. The Rana, after paying every honour, gallantly returned her to her husband. Aurangzeb, however, was incapable of appreciating this for the chivalrous gesture which it was.

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70 Ibid. p.212.

71 Ibid. p.95.

> Aurangzeb, who believed in no virtue but self-interest, imputed the generosity and forbearance of the Ranah to the fear of future vengeance and continued the war.[72]

As with many of his Enlightenment contemporaries, especially Alexander Dow, Orme felt that Aurangzeb's reign was a degeneration from the enlightened standards set by his great predecessors. Dow in his **History of Hindostan** saw the era of the early Mughals, especially the reign of Akbar, as the golden age of Mughal rule.[73] On religious, legal and administrative grounds the reign of Akbar embodied for him the archetype of Enlightened rule. In Dow's eyes, the two great principles of Mughal government at its best were its emphasis on religious toleration and attention to the contentment of the empire's subjects, as the vital source of it's peace and prosperity. The effect of these views on Orme was very evident in the letter he included in his text, purportedly written from the Raja of Jodhpur, Jaswant Singh, to Aurangzeb in 1678.[74] The letter, translated from a Persian manuscript and given to Orme by Boughton Rouse, condemned Aurangzeb for the iniquities and injustices of his reign. It reminded Aurangzeb of the achievements of his forebears and the benevolence upon which these achievements had been founded. The letter compared this with the present strife torn and impoverished condition to which Aurangzeb's policies had reduced the empire. It stigmatised Aurangzeb's persecution of Hinduism as unworthy of the race of Timur and beneath its dignity, and ended with an eloquent speech for the unity of belief which was clearly deist in its inspiration.[75]

Despite the limitations imposed on him by his material, Orme did his best to make a substantial contribution to the knowledge of the Marathas and of Aurangzeb's reign. From the sources available to him he tried to build up a picture of the origin of the Marathas through the use of a reasoned and critical method. From Du Perron he learnt that Marathi was spoken westward of the Ghats, thus it was on this premise that he based his speculations: "It is a very admissible conjecture, to suppose that their ancient country extended wheresoever their language prevails

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72 Ibid. p.86.

73 J. S. Grewal, **Muslim Rule in India. The Assessments of British Historians** (Calcutta, 1970), p.18.

74 **Fragments**, pp.252-5.

75 Ibid. p.255.

at present."[76] A manuscript account of the Deccan in Orme's possession, informed him that the Marathas once occupied the territories comprised within the immediate government of Aurangabad. Orme therefore put both this and Du Perron's information together and attempted to make his own computation on this basis.

> Allowing the same extent from north to south as far as this meridian to the eastward of the gauts, as from Bardez to the Tapti on the westward, their inland country exceeded that on the seacoast by one hundred and fifty miles in breadth, and the whole on both sides of the mountain may be esteemed three hundred and forty miles from north to south, and two hundred from west to east.[77]

Of the origin of Marathi itself, Orme believed that like all other Hindu languages, that it was derived from Sanskrit. Thus he held that the Marathas themselves thought it was closer to the original than other regional languages. Following Du Perron's opinion, he came to regard the Maratha version of Hinduism and its rites as quite peculiar to themselves. Orme's military interests also led him to study Maratha military methods, and he was able to provide an early picture of the organisation and training of the Maratha cavalry.

The **Fragments** also served an important function in that it was more or less the first work to uncover the gaps in the knowledge of India during Aurangzeb's reign. As he did with his dissertation in 1763, Orme highlighted the gaps and pinpointed the areas for further study. Referring to Aurangzeb's war with the Pathans from 1675 onwards, he bemoaned the lack of an authentic source for the conflict.[78] However, he thought that it was just possible that some writer at Delhi may have managed to compile one and if so, there was a good chance that some account of it may have filtered through to Europe. In this context, Orme mentioned a manuscript history of India referred to by Du Perron, which had been written by a Frenchman called Gentil. This, he hoped, might be able to supply further information and he hoped that it would be published soon. It was the same case with

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76 Ibid. p.210.

77 Ibid. p.211.

78 Ibid. pp.236-7.

his account of Aurangzeb's wars against the Rajputs. Here Orme underlined that the materials which he had been able to collect on the Rajput states of Chitore, Marwar and Jodhpur had been largely minimal, and that Rajasthan itself still remained largely undiscovered and unknown.[79] Orme also pointed out the inadequacy of the information available on Sivaji's most important and significant undertaking, his expedition to the Carnatic in 1667. He himself, he said, had been prevented from gaining a regular idea of Sivaji's expedition by the "want of contemporary record".[80] Given the great significance which this affair had, both for Sivaji's own career and for the outcome of future events, Orme felt that it was all the more imperative that further work should be done on it.[81]

Along with the efforts of James Kerr, Orme's work marked a pioneer contribution to the history of Maratha scholarship. Together they provided the very first English works to be written on the Marathas. Kerr's work however, did not have anything like the scope of the **Fragments;** as Kerr himself admitted, he confined himself mainly to the role of translator and never attempted the task of a historian.[82] His work, which he claimed was based only on the translation of a Persian manuscript, concentrated almost entirely on the Marathas and their interaction and impact on the politics of North India. Critically, it attracted a favourable but rather slight response. On the whole though, it was not really considered to have made any great contribution to the overall knowledge of the subject. The **Fragments** in contrast, seem to have made a much more substantial critical impact. The wars with the Marathas had made Orme's subject highly topical and one which was very much in the public eye.[83] Hitherto, very little had been known about the Marathas and Orme's work was seen as making a valuable contribution to the subject. Despite the inadequacy of his materials, the **Fragments** was highly valued for its accuracy and its information. Through his collection of different sources which mentioned or described the Marathas, Orme was held to be

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79 Ibid. pp.251-2.

80 Ibid. p.63.

81 Ibid. p.233.

82 J. Kerr, **A Short Historical Narrative of the Rise and Rapid Advancement of the Mahrattah State** (1782), p.2.

83 **Critical Review**, vol.55, 1783, p.169.

contributing a much fuller picture of a people who had not been properly studied before:

> But their transient appearance and their powerful though temporary efforts have not permitted the historian to examine them with care, or enabled him to describe them with exactness.[84]

The **Fragments** was also seen as an important contribution towards understanding the increasing weakness of the Delhi government, especially its growing loss of control over its dependent powers.[85] On the whole however, perhaps the most successful aspect of the **Fragments** was Orme's depiction of Sivaji. As he had done with Clive so many years before, Orme's depiction of Sivaji dominated the whole work and clearly caught the imagination of his reviewers:

> Sevagi, indeed, appears to have been a most extraordinary personage; but as no one of his achievements can give the Readers so clear an idea of his military qualities, we shall extract the character here given of him....[86]

James Grant Duff, writing in his classic **History of the Mahrattas** almost a century later, was full of praise for Orme and his efforts to open up such a difficult and uncharted field of learning:

> The difficulty of obtaining the requisite materials has hitherto deterred most of our countrymen from venturing on a subject where the indefatigable Orme has left his Fragments as a monument to his research, accompanied by the attestation of the labour which they cost him.[87]

Clearly he found very little to fault with either the method or the industry of Orme's research. In fact, Grant Duff felt that Orme's researches had been heading in the right direction but that they had been crippled by his lack of the necessary materials. In his eyes, Orme had been "on the borders of truth without being rewarded as his research deserved".[88]

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84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 **Monthly Review**, vol.68, 1783, p.364.

87 J. C. Grant Duff, **History of the Mahrattas**, 4th Edition (1878), vol.1, p.v.

88 Ibid. p.336.

For all its limitations, the **Fragments** did indeed have a considerable influence on the development of later scholarship. Jonathan Scott, whose **History of the Dekkan** (1794) provided the first really substantial study of the Deccan, openly admitted the influence which Orme's work had on him. It was, he said, Orme's work which had first motivated him to launch upon his study of the Deccan and prompted him to begin collecting Persian materials:

> The perusal of Mr. Orme's works, when in India, first excited my curiosity to obtain that information, the want of which he regrets; and for this purpose I have procured every manuscript likely to afford any anecdotes of Aurangzeb and his successors.[89]

What had particularly impressed Scott was Orme's emphasis on the importance of Aurangzeb's reign as the essential background to the understanding of later events, and the need for further work on the subject. Thus in the preface with which he opened his second volume, Scott was to quote at length from the call which Orme had made in the **Fragments**, for further research and study on the events of Aurangzeb's reign.[90]

However, while Orme's industry and research still commanded admiration, there were clear signs of an increasing dissatisfaction with his presentation: "The narrative is generally clear but dry and inanimate.... much labour is employed to connect his detached materials but little to enliven them".[91] Orme's failure to analyze or draw any conclusions from his materials, also led to the growing feeling that both his historical style and his approach were becoming more and more out of date:

> Content with the character of an annalist, Mr. Orme seems scarcely to aim at that of an historian....The reflections, which would add credit to the man of discernment or humanity, are thinly scattered; and there are few deductions of effects from those causes which necessarily originate from the nature of the human mind. What a philosophical banquet might we not have expected from a Robertson or a Raynal.[92]

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89 J. Scott, **Ferishta's History of the Dekkan** (1794), vol.2, p.i.

90 Ibid.

91 **Critical Review**, vol.55, 1783, p.171.

92 Ibid.

Literary tastes had changed a great deal since the 1760s and the philosophical history was now in its heyday. In these changed circumstances, it was hardly surprising that Orme's dry, annalist approach no longer had the same appeal which it had once enjoyed.

His writings apart, Orme was also able to make a substantial contribution to the growing geographical knowledge of India. Through his maps, as well as his other efforts, Orme played a sizeable role in promoting the growth of Indian geography between the years 1760 - 1780. Prior to this period, the European idea of India was founded principally on the efforts of western map makers who had never even been to India. Even the work of the Frenchman D'Anville, renowned as the first scientific map maker and one of the founder figures of modern geography, relied heavily on second and even third hand evidence. With the increasing expansion of European military activities in India from the mid-eighteenth century, all this began to change, and by the 1760s the first surveys were starting to be made. Orme took an active part in fostering this growing awareness. He made great efforts to emphasize the importance of geographical knowledge in the eyes of the high ranking military men with whom he had links in India. The lengths which Orme went to draw their attention to the military value of maps and charts is underlined in a memoir written by him, entitled an "Essay on the Art of War",[93] presumably for the benefit of Clive, Smith or some other military friend. In this Orme pointed out the dearth of good maps and charts in India, and underlined how much the subject had been neglected by the generals and other commanding officers.[94] He emphasised the advantages which were to be gained from good maps and stressed how important it was that a commanding officer should always have a map of his prospective area of operations. On the basis that they would never be able to gather sufficient information on the intelligence received at the Council board, Orme urged that proper surveys should be made of any prospective campaign area.[95] As regards personnel, Orme took pains to underline the importance of employing only the most

93 OV.303, 1765, pp.109-43.

94 Ibid. p.109.

95 Ibid. p.111.

capable men, those who were most qualified for their task. He then went on to outline the tasks and procedures which should be borne in mind:

> I would have a plan of your whole frontier, with the Engineer's observations from League to League. And where you have any defiles they should be accurately described, surveys having first been made with the most minute exactness..... From a complete engineer you may go much further. He is not only to confine himself to the roads only but the situation of the country.[96]

Orme's persistent demands for geographical materials to accompany and illustrate his **History,** must also have had some bearing on the geographical initiatives which were taken out in India by such men as Clive and Richard Smith. There seems, for example, to have been a strong link between Orme's constant requests to Clive for maps, charts and sketches, and Clive's decision to employ James Rennell on the large scale surveys which first mapped out Bengal. In November 1764, Orme had written to Clive:

> Make me a vast map of Bengal in which not only the outlines of the province but also all the different subdivisions of Burdwan, Beerboom etc. may be justly marked. Take astronomical observations of longitude if you have anyone capable of doing it. I send you a skeleton of the Bengal map I intend for my second volume.[97]

Clive responded wholeheartedly to his friend's requests:

> I am preparing plans in abundance for you. You shall have very exact charts of Bengal, Behar and Orissa and of the Mughal Empire as far as Delhi at least. A map of the Ganges likewise and all the other rivers of consequence.[98]

On his return to India in 1765, Clive launched Rennell (who was already at work surveying the Ganges) on a full scale study of Bengal, giving him particular

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96 Ibid. pp.109-111.

97 OV. 222, Orme - Clive, 21 Nov.1764, p.114.

98 OV. 43, Clive - Orme, 29 Sept.1765, p.30.

instructions to produce a general map of the province.[99] During Clive's tenure Rennell produced several general studies of Bengal and the Ganges, and he and his assistants made strenuous efforts to have their maps ready before Clive's departure. In 1767, as a reward for his labours, Clive appointed Rennell Surveyor General; thus raising him from a mere surveyor of rivers to be the geographer of a vast and still largely uncharted country. Many of these early maps and surveys were to find their way back to Orme, though the medium of Clive and his then close friend, Henry Vansittart.[100] These included a rough sketch of a general map of Bengal, several surveys of the southern banks of the Ganges and various general maps of Bengal and the Ganges. Although the evidence is not conclusive, the resemblance between these maps and Orme's own demands is too strong to be easily dismissed. Neither is there any denying Orme's strong connections with Clive and Clive's own influence over Rennell's activities. In the circumstances, it seems highly probable that Orme did indeed have something to do with Rennell's early activities in Bengal.

Orme may also have had a similar influence on the early maps which were made of Northern India. Richard Smith, whilst in command of the 2nd Brigade at Allahabad, also went to great lengths to satisfy Orme's requests for geographical information.[101] This led him to employ Samuel Showers in a capacity which was very similar to Rennell's. From 1766 - 1769 Showers was constantly employed on surveys of the region between Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra and Delhi, which then marked the western frontier of British rule in the North. He made surveys of the Gogra,[102] Gumti[103] and Karamnasa[104] rivers in the Lucknow area, and mapped out the roads in the Allahabad and Fyzabad areas.[105] Like Rennell's maps, all of these were also sent on to Orme. Although not a very well known figure by the

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99 A. Cook, "Major James Rennell and a Bengal Atlas," **India Office Library and Records Report for 1976**, p.9.

100 OV.134, pp.89-93.

101 OV. 222, Orme - R. Smith, 1 Feb.1767, pp.157-8.

102 OV. 334, f.16.

103 OV. 8, pp. 3-20.

104 OV. 334, f.14.

105 Ibid. f.22.

standards of the day, there is no denying the value of Showers' work; which was acknowledged in later years by Rennell, who drew on it for his **Map of Hindostan.**

Orme's other contribution to Indian geography was through the maps which he published alongside his various historical writings. Orme's first maps were those of the Coromandel Coast, which were contained in the first volume of his **History.** For these, Orme used the work of D'Anville as his basic framework. In 1752, D'Anville had brought out his **Carte de l'Inde,** which he followed up the next year by producing a large scale map of the Carnatic. Orme went to great lengths to obtain the assistance of D'Anville, who provided him with a section of his map of the Carnatic, from Madras to Negapatam.[106] To this prototype however, Orme was able to add new information about the interior, which he had gained from his contacts with English soldiers who had campaigned in the area. Thus a march by an English force in 1755 enabled Orme to sketch in more information about the route to Trichinopoli, while a march made by Caillaud in 1763 enabled him to do the same for the areas between Nellore, Conjeveram and Udayagiri. Orme was also able to use his detailed and particular knowledge to provide two detailed maps of the area around Trichinopoli. One was a map of the immediate surroundings of the city, with all its landmarks and natural features, while the other dealt with a much larger area, covering all the country ten miles to the West and eighteen miles to the East of the city.

Another major map of the Coromandel Coast was included in the second volume of the **History,** which came out in 1778. Entitled "The Coromandel Countries, from the Coleroon to Cape Comorin", like his earlier maps, it was still heavily reliant on D'Anville for its outline. However it contained fresh and detailed information on the countries of Madura and Tinnevelli, once again obtained from English soldiers who had been campaigning in that area. These materials in particular, had the advantage of being composed by the Company's Chief Engineer, John Call. In 1782, in his **Historical Fragments,** Orme published another map of Southern India, which dealt with the southern tip of the subcontinent, from Madras to Cape Comorin. This, however, had been mostly superseded by Rennell's depiction

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106 OV. 336, f.13.

of South India in his **Map of Hindostan,** which had come out in 1783. This was quite apparent in at least three areas, in the representation of the Gulf of Mannar and in the outline of the Malabar and Coromandel Coast all of which were far less detailed and much more formalised than in Rennell's depiction.

The measure of Orme's contribution, can be gauged by the respect in which his work on the Carnatic was held by James Rennell. Rennell, in his **Memoir of a Map of Hindostan** (1783) regarded Orme's maps as an important source for the geography of South India. What made him especially important in Rennell's eyes, was the access which Orme had had to the ground-breaking surveys, resulting from the campaigns of the British armies in that area:

> And as Mr. Orme, in particular, has had access to all or most of the surveys of the marches of the British armies on the side of Mysore and the Carnatic, I shall take his map for groundwork after examining his scale of distances.[107]

Rennell also found the accuracy and precision which Orme put into ascertaining his facts of great use to him: "Caroor in Mr. Orme's History is said to be 50 British or 43 G. miles from Trichinopoly and five miles south of the Caveri river ..... I have placed it accordingly."[108] Rennell therefore came to regard Orme's work as the basic framework for many of his judgements. Indeed in many cases, he found he had only to alter specifics, such as details of distance, longitude and latitude:

> After thus establishing a scale for the differences of longitude, I have copied all that part of Mr. Orme's map, between the parallels of Pondicherry and Chandeghere; and between the meridians of Madras and Ooscotta.[109]

Thus it was more or less entirely from Orme that Rennell derived his knowledge of many key areas in the South, such as his idea of the Madura and Tinnevelli countries[110] and the territories around Tanjore.[111]

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107 J. Rennell, **Memoir of a Map of Hindostan** (1783), p.79.

108 Ibid. p.80.

109 Ibid. p.79.

110 Ibid. p.80.

111 Ibid.

Orme was also to make a considerable contribution to what knowledge there was at the time of Western and Central India. In 1782, to accompany the **Fragments,** he brought out two maps of Central India: one of the Central Deccan and Western India, and a much more small scale chart of the Deccan, according to the marches of the French general, Bussy. Unlike the other maps contained in the **Fragments,** these maps were not superseded by Rennell's work. Rennell's **Map of Hindostan** did not mark any radical advance in the knowledge of Central India at the time. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that he was still using much the same sources as Orme. The premier source of information on Central India during the period was still Bussy,[112] who during his command in the Deccan had had surveys made of his marches and maps compiled from them. These were not widely distributed and Orme and D'Anville were amongst the few men who obtained copies. From Rennell's **Memoir,**[113] it is apparent that he too, was still relying on the evidence of Bussy's marches, as they had been laid down in the maps of Montresor and his engineer corps. The source of these materials was most likely to have been Orme himself, who enjoyed much closer relations with Bussy than Rennell ever did. Indeed it is highly probable that these maps on the Deccan may have been amongst the materials which Rennell was referring to, when he had complained of Orme's refusal to share his materials with him. Bussy's materials, in fact, were to provide the only knowledge of the Deccan and the Nizam's dominions for almost 40 years. For it was not until Colin McKenzie's efforts in 1792 that any attempt was made at a regular survey.[114] In the circumstances, it is very likely that Orme knew as much about Central India as anyone else.

It was a very similar case with Orme's idea of Western India. This was revealed in his map of the Central Deccan and Western India, which at the time more or less represented the sum total of British knowledge of the areas outside the Bombay Presidency's sphere of influence. Certainly Rennell did not seem to know any more than Orme. The whole area, in fact, was to remain relatively unfamiliar

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112 R. H. Phillimore, **Historical Records of the Survey of India. vol.1 The Eighteenth Century,** (Dehra Dun, 1945), p.320.

113 Rennell, **Memoir,** pp.65-6.

114 Phillimore, **Records of the Survey of India.** p.245.

until Charles Reynolds, the Surveyor General to the army, submitted his map of Western India in 1787.[115] Produced as a result of the war against Tipu Sultan and the campaigns against the Marathas, Reynolds's map was the first to be based on a real experience of the area; as such, it marked the first major advance on the maps of Orme and Rennell.

Orme's knowledge of Bengal, on the other hand, derived almost entirely from the fieldwork which had been done by Rennell. His two maps of the province, which he had published along with the second volume of his **History**, were both the result of Rennell's work. Through the efforts of men like Clive and Vansittart, Orme had received many of Rennell's maps long before Rennell himself returned from Bengal. Orme had begun by working on one of Rennell's very early maps, which Clive had brought back home with him in 1767. This was a map of Bengal and Northern India, which showed the old divisions of the province and the various territories of North India.[116] Orme seems to have thought that Clive had brought this map home with when he returned from Bengal, hence he referred to it as "the large map of Bengal, brought home by Colonel Clive and now engraving".[117] This makes it the earliest map we have which was done by Rennell,for it is almost a whole year earlier than the earliest map of Bengal in the India Office, which was dated 1768. Orme had planned to use this map, which showed the various political domains of North India and their respective areas of control, as the original frontispiece for his second volume. This project, however, along with the rest of the second volume, was shelved for almost a decade. By the time Rennell returned home in 1778, the map was clearly out of date and Orme abandoned all plans to publish it. It was superseded by a new map, drawn by Rennell himself, entitled "The Countries of Indostan East of Delhi", which was published as the new frontispiece.

The other map of Bengal which Orme included in his text, was entitled "A Map of Bengal with Its Divisions and the Adjacent Countries." As its title indicated, it dealt primarily with the administrative divisions of the province.

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115 Ibid. p.379.

116 OV.164(b)

117 India XI. p.3006.

Compared with the "Map of Bengal and Bihar" which Rennell had made in 1775, which provided a much clearer, more in-depth picture of both provinces, Orme's map appears rather outdated. However, there were strong similarities between Orme's map and a much earlier map of Rennell's of 1768, called "A map of the Kingdom of Bengal drawn from Actual Surveys and Divided into Provinces." For example, there were strong likeness in the situation of all the various regions, in the way in which the coastal isles and the Sundarbans were depicted and in the course of the Hugli river and the Ganges. What differences there were, were only really ones of scope and detail. Orme's use of this map suggests that he was gradually being forced back on to his old and increasingly outdated materials. The new geographical work which was taking place in Bengal, namely the surveys which were being undertaken by the Company, was no longer available to Orme. As a result, by the end of the 1760s Orme had more or less lost contact with the sources of up-to-date information. In the circumstances, he now found himself heavily dependent on Rennell's goodwill for what new material he did obtain.

The wide and varied range of Orme's work earned him a considerable reputation in the eyes of his contemporaries. By all accounts, Orme enjoyed great esteem within the Anglo-Indian world, where he was seen as a leading authority on India and Indian affairs. The geographer Alexander Dalrymple, for example, relied heavily on Orme's judgement and expertise while assembling the materials for his **Oriental Repertory** (1794), a vast encyclopedic compilation on all things Indian. Dalrymple for one, had no doubts about Orme's standing; "no better authority can be obtained or wished for than his in all matters concerning India."[118] His sentiments were echoed by many of his contemporaries. The **History** , for example, was considered by many as something of a landmark in the history of writing on India. It made a substantial impression on the next generation of British historians, nearly all of whom had read and been influenced by it in some way. The effect of Orme's demarcation of the gaps in Indo-Muslim history, for example, was clearly visible on Alexander Dow. In his **History of Hindostan**, Dow was deeply conscious of the imperfect state of knowledge regarding Timur's descendants, and he echoed Orme's

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118 A. Dalrymple, **Oriental Repertory**(1808), vol.2, p.484.

emphasis on the need for a complete history of the subject.[119] James Kerr too, was very familiar with the **History** and spoke of it in admiring terms as "Mr. Orme's justly admired History of the war in India."[120] It was also held in very high regard by Jonathan Scott, who thought that Orme, along with Cambridge, had so "amply detailed" the history of the British involvement in the Deccan, that there was little more to be done in that quarter.[121]

This regard was widely shared by the leading Oriental scholars of the time, men of the calibre of William Jones and Anquetil Du Perron. William Jones, the greatest Oriental scholar of his day, always emphasised the contribution which he felt Orme had made to Indian learning. Thus in his Third Discourse to the Asiatic Society in 1786, Jones spoke in glowing terms of "Mr. Orme, the Historian of India; who unites an exquisite taste for every fine art, with an accurate knowledge of Asiatic manners".[122] Du Perron too held Orme in very high regard and on his behalf he went to great lengths to compile a préçis on Mughal affairs from his own papers.[123] Considering the low regard in which Du Perron held most English Oriental scholars,[124] the fact that he was prepared to go to so much trouble says a great deal for Orme.

For all this, however, Orme's achievement as an Oriental scholar was never to match that of many of his later contemporaries. His ignorance of Persian and of Sanskrit, ensured that his contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Indian culture remained fundamentally limited. Certainly, it made his contribution far less significant than that of Alexander Dow and Jonathan Scott in the field of Persian studies, and of Charles Wilkins and William Jones in the field of Hindu learning. Orme's contribution really lay in the influence which his work had on the efforts of subsequent scholars. This we have seen, was considerable. The **Fragments** and the maps and other 'Oriental' material included in the **History** were

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119 A. Dow, **History of Hindostan**(1770), vol.2, p.334.

120 J. Kerr, **A Short Historical Narrative of the Rise and Rapid Advancement of the Mahrattah State** (1782), p.114.

121 Scott, **History of the Dekkan**, vol.1. p.v.

122 W. Jones, **Eleven Discourses** (Calcutta,1873), p.16.

123 OV.169, pp.1-65.

124 A. Waley,"Anquetil Du Perron and Sir William Jones", **History Today**, vol.2 (1952), pp.25-33.

regarded as pioneering efforts, and Orme was credited with opening up fields which had hitherto remained almost unknown. His work was then taken up and advanced by a subsequent generation of scholars, who were much better equipped than he himself had been.

CONCLUSION

The story of Orme's career was a case of wasted opportunities and limited means. Although Orme did achieve a certain degree of success in later life, it was never on the level which he had hoped for. The crucial moments of Orme's career were decided out in Madras. His resignation from the service proved to be the turning point in his life and determined the nature of the role which he was to play in Indian affairs. Orme had had every chance of making his name out in India. He had shown that he had all the abilities necessary for an 'Indian' career and he had been on the verge of becoming Governor. This would have brought him the influence and the independent fortune, which would have helped him to establish himself in England on the scale he aspired to. This was his golden opportunity and had he taken it the rest of his life would have been very different. However, Orme had always been a deeply ambitious man; supremely confident of his own abilities, he was convinced that he alone possessed the talent and the vision which the Company's service required. Thus he was determined to advance himself at every opportunity. The story of Orme's early years, when he seized on every means at his disposal to promote himself, is a testament to this driving ambition. However, through his ambition and his impatience Orme finally overreached himself. His intriguing and duplicitous tactics turned the whole settlement against him, forcing him to abandon all hopes of a career out in India.

The rest of Orme's life was a story of trying to make ends meet and aspiring to a level of influence which was beyond his means. Rather than trying to fulfil his ambitions, it was to be more a case of toning them down. Money for example, was always to be a constant problem; Orme did not have the means to live like a great gentleman or to become an important 'Indian' political figure, instead he retreated into the world of books and threw himself into his studies. Here again, he found that he had to reconcile himself to a certain amount of disappointment. Well-received though his work was, its lustre was tarnished for him by a lack of commercial success. Although it is true that in later life, Orme did achieve a certain degree of

contentment, this was more because he had succeeded in accepting his lot and moderating his ambitions.

For all his rhetoric, Orme was neither more nor less, honest than any of his contemporaries. This is suggested by the accusations of corruption and intimidation which surrounded his departure from Madras. Nevertheless, like many Englishmen of his generation, Orme was appalled by the level of corruption and rapacity which characterised the activities of the English in the aftermath of Plassey. Orme's vision of himself as a patriotic historian was confined purely to his desire to celebrate the military achievements of his countrymen. It did not extend to believing that they were justified in everything they did. When he finally did bring himself to return to his **History,** Orme was to omit or ignore many of these misdeeds. This however, does not make him an imperial propagandist. Rather than condone the unsavoury incidents which marked the conquest of Bengal, Orme deliberately chose not to mention them.

As the result of his education and his own personal inclinations, Orme had come to believe very deeply in the political legacy of the Roman Republic. Thus, for him, the idea of a territorial empire and all it stood for, was an anathema. He recognised that he could not alter what had happened, nevertheless he preferred not to face it. It was this attitude which caused Orme to leave his history of the Bengal War unfinished and turn his attention to the Carnatic. It also explains why he never returned to his **History** to write the third volume which he had been contemplating. Instead he turned aside from the distasteful reality of the present to chart the history of the rise of the Marathas. Far from celebrating or condoning British imperialism, Orme, as far as he could, chose not to mention it.

Orme's outlook was not totally incompatible with the high standards of his historical accuracy and impartiality which he had set for himself. As far as Orme was concerned, what this entailed was a vigorous critical treatment of his subject-matter and material. However, it was up to him to decide the nature of his subject matter and to set the scope of his material. Suppressing or ignoring the sordid or discreditable aspects of his material was a vital part of Orme's historical technique. Without it he could not have faced his subject, and he would certainly not have been able to continue with his writing.

I have described Orme as a "Nabob, a Historian and an Orientalist." I will now try to gauge the measure of his achievements in each of these roles. As a "Nabob", Orme's career was more or less a failure. His career out in India ended in ignominy and humiliation. Nor only were his aspirations as a Company servant cut short, he also failed to make anything like the fortune which was acquired by many of his returning contemporaries. Regardless of whether they had enjoyed a full career or not, many of Orme's fellows returned home with huge fortunes, prompting their envious countrymen to describe them as 'Nabobs.' As a returned 'Nabob', Orme was not a great success either, for he was never wealthy or powerful enough to be able to make his mark in Company politics.

Although Orme had begun his history in the admiring shadow of Clive's glory, he was much more than a hired propagandist. Even though he was never really to criticise his friends reputation, Orme's second volume was a much more detached and balanced treatment than the first one had been. In this Orme firmly distanced himself from the Clive legend and established his credentials as an independent historian. In its time, the **History** was a great critical success. It attracted excellent contemporary reviews and was widely admired by many of the leading literary men of the period. Despite this, it had only a very limited commercial impact and its appeal remained more or less confined to 'Indian' circles. The **History** in fact, was very much a product of its time. It was a good annalist work and as such, it was very highly regarded. However, in the age of the philosophical history of Robertson and Gibbon it was already old-fashioned. Although no reservations were voiced at the time, by the time the **Historical Fragments** was published grave doubts were being expressed about his outdated approach. Indeed by 1786 the **History** seems to have completely disappeared from view. The Marquess of Wellesley, for example, although he greatly enjoyed reading it, had never heard of the **History** before and confessed that he had the greatest difficulty in obtaining further copies.[1] The significance of the **History** really lies in its value as a monument to a particular period in time. It is the work of a man writing during a transitional stage in Britain's experience of India, when it was starting to break out from the commercial enclave

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1 **Historical Manuscripts Commission**, 13th Report, Appendix, Part III, **The Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue .... at Dropmore**, vol.1, (1892), p.263.

to which it had been confined, to stand on the verge of a much broader, more tangible experience.[2]

Much the same thing can be said about Orme's Oriental writings. These at various stages, all reflect the changing nature of the British experience of India. His dissertations, for example, represent the extent of European knowledge in the age of Montesquieu. As for the maps, these too, reflect the early stages in Britain's geographical discovery of India. In the age before the systematic surveys of Rennell, Reynolds and McKenzie, Orme's maps provided a very valuable and informative point of reference. It is the same with Orme's **Historical Fragments.** Once again he was venturing out into an uncharted field and writing in an entirely new domain. Thereafter however, his work was overtaken by the efforts of a new generation of scholars, such as Charles Wilkins and William Jones, whose linguistic abilities left his own researches far behind. Their grasp of Indian languages shows how far 'Indic' studies had progressed since Orme's day and underlines how, even during his own lifetime, his work was already becoming out of date. Orme in fact, was very much a pioneer, writing about a pioneering phase. Within a short time, however, the circumstances had changed completely and the fashion which he himself had begun, had overtaken him.

Orme's whole life and career, in the final analysis, was one which was founded on India and the East. During the early part of his life, India was the place where he saw his career and where he hoped to make his fortune. Having failed in this he returned home, where he sought to establish a new career by writing about India and involving himself in 'East India' politics. As Edward Said would say, Orme's was a career made out of the East.[3] Said goes on to argue that any such career must inevitably be governed by an overriding political imperialism:

> Political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination and scholarly institutions - in such a way as to make its avoidance an intellectual and historical impossibility.[4]

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2 Van Aalst, " The British View of India", p.12.

3 Said, **Orientalism**, p.5.

4 Ibid, p.14.

As far as Orme is concerned, it is true that his career does reflect the shifting circumstances of Britain's relationship with India in the eighteenth century. However, at heart, Orme was fundamentally the representative of a pioneer phase. He did not have the intellectual or the linguistic tools to "command" or "classify" the Orient as Said would have us believe. Thus as a pioneer, his work lacks the overt imperialism of the later, more sophisticated generation of Orientalists, who in Said's eye came to epitomise the heyday of the empire. Given the limited intellectual experience of his time, all Orme could hope to do was to try to understand and assess India as best he could.

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